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PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE FOCAL PERSONS TRAINED

By Rebecca Nalumansi, UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO)



Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) focal persons from UN agencies, Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies and Civil Society after their training © UN Uganda

On 26th August 2025, a three-day workshop kicked off at the WFP-UNICEF joint premises in Mbuya, Kampala, focusing on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). Participants were drawn from UN agencies, Government Ministries and Civil Society.

Capacity was built for participants to prevent and respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), strengthen safe reporting mechanisms, and foster a culture of accountability and integrity in humanitarian and development work.

Speaking at the opening of the workshop, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Uganda, Mr. Leonard Zulu noted that "one of the most important responsibilities we carry as United Nations, Government, civil society actors, and human beings is preventing sexual exploitation and abuse".

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UN Resident Coordinator in Uganda, Mr. Leonard Zulu, delivering opening remarks at the training of focal persons for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) focal persons from UN agencies, Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies and Civil Society © UN Uganda

“Your role is also to equip others—partners, colleagues, and communities—with the knowledge and tools to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, while fostering open conversations about it. I encourage you today to speak openly,” he told the participants.

He noted that PSEA affects everyone - women, men, girls and boys and no one is immune from its consequences, and everyone has a role to play in ending it.

PSEA is a system-wide priority with the United Nations. Member States are required to establish normative standards and to ensure accountability. The UN is responsible for supporting these efforts. Preventing sexual exploitation and abuse is both a global priority and a UN system-wide priority.

The UNCT PSEA Chair and Deputy Representative of WFP, Mr. Marcus Prior in his closing remarks, recommended the deepening of the collaboration with Government counterparts to further institutionalise PSEA measures within the national systems.

This is especially critical in Uganda given that the country currently hosts 1.9 million refugees – the highest number on the African continent. These women, men, girls, and boys are among the most vulnerable, and ensuring their protection is a shared responsibility.

PSEA focal persons are the backbone of this effort. They are the technical leaders that ensure that prevention is mainstreamed in all programmes, that safe reporting mechanisms exist, that investigations are followed through without delay, and that survivors’ needs always come first.

The PSEA focal persons are required to share feedback with survivors once it is available. Their role is also to equip others—partners, colleagues, and communities—with the knowledge and tools to prevent and respond to SEA, while fostering open conversations about it.

This training was more than a capacity-building exercise. It was about building a culture of accountability and integrity across institutions. It was about making sure that zero tolerance is not just a slogan, but a lived reality in every office, every project, and every community interaction. It was about cultivating respect, protecting human rights, and ensuring our offices are safe spaces for all, through the focal points carrying forward these principles as champions of PSEA within their organisations and across Uganda. 🌍

FROM VIOLENCE VICTIM TO EMPOWERMENT: RHODA'S STORY OF SURVIVAL

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



Rhoda Chechepus sits in her compound in during an interview in Katukumwok Village of Amudat District in the Karamoja Sub-region of Uganda
© UN Women/Samuel Wamutu

One night in December 2019, when the flames swallowed her hut in the middle of the night, Rhoda Chechepus clutched her children and they ran for their lives. It was not the first time her husband had tried to kill her. For years, violence shadowed her marriage—leaving scars on her body and memories too painful to erase.

Today, at 32, the mother of three from Katukumwok Village in Amudat District carries those scars as reminders of why she chose to walk away from her marriage six years ago.

To make matters worse, Rhoda had no land to cultivate to feed her children. “My husband told me that I should struggle as a woman to feed my family. By then, I had two children and was already pregnant with the third,” she recalls.

As the violence intensified, she turned to her clan elders for help. To her disappointment, they told her to endure the beatings because her husband had already paid dowry to her family.

Amid her struggle, one of her uncles offered her a small piece of land where she could grow food to support her children. Around the same time, her village was benefiting

from the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF). Through the programme, she received UGX 160,000 (about US\$45), which she used to buy materials and build a small grass-thatched house away from her husband.

It was during this period in early 2021 that Rhoda first learned about the Spotlight Initiative through a friend involved in the project “Make Happiness, Not Violence,” implemented in Amudat by UN Women’s partner, the Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU), with funding from the European Union.

“I never thought that as a mother I could support a family single-handedly, free from violence,” she says.

Through CDFU sessions, Rhoda received counseling and encouragement and was linked to a partner, the National Association of Women’s Organisations in Uganda



Rhoda knitting the traditional clothes that she sells at weekly markets around Amudat District. © UN Women/Samuel Wamuttu

(NAWOU). With their support, and after completing business skills training with a focus on the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) model, she gained the confidence to start a small business knitting and selling traditional Pokot attire at the weekly market. “On a good day, I can make a profit of between UGX 100,000 and 200,000 (about US\$ 42–57),” she explains proudly.

From her savings, Rhoda was able to buy four goats, which have since multiplied to 15. She has also managed to pay her son’s school fees at a boarding school in Amudat District.

Yet even with some economic independence, Rhoda’s nightmare was far from over. Her husband continued to harass her—even at the marketplace. “At one point, I thought of ending my life because everything felt worthless. But then I changed my mind—for the sake of my children,” she recalls, her face clouded with sadness.


However, during one of CDFU’s community sensitization sessions, a member of the Natukuman Women Drama Group—which translates to “Seeing from Above” in the Pokot dialect—encouraged her to formally report her case to the Family Division of the Uganda Police in Amudat District.

“Although he refused to appear at police, he stopped harassing me after that, because he realized there are laws that protect women against such violence,” Rhoda says.



Rhoda showing part of her flock of goats that have economically empowered her as a woman. © UN Women/Samuel Wamuttu

The Spotlight Initiative is a major multi-year programme by the European Union and United Nations, dedicated to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG), including harmful practices like child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), and strengthening survivors’ access to services.

In Uganda, it’s implemented through a strong partnership among seven UN agencies—including UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UNHCR—alongside the Government and civil society. 

EUROPEAN UNION-FUNDED CASH PLUS PROGRAMME GIVES VULNERABLE GIRLS IN NORTHERN UGANDA SECOND CHANCE AT EDUCATION

By Catherine Ntabadde, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)



Dr. Robin Nandy (UNICEF jacket), UNICEF's Representative to Uganda hands out certificates to one of the beneficiaries of the Gender for Development Uganda (G4DU) CashPlus programme at Lokung Secondary School, Lamwo District. © UNICEF Uganda

By 7 a.m. on 6 August 2025, parents and guardians of beneficiaries of the European Union, Germany and Belgium governments co-funded Cash Plus Initiative had arrived at Padibe Girls Comprehensive Secondary School in Lamwo District.

The parents and guardians were at the school to join their adolescent girls as they received the second disbursement of the cash transfer implemented under the Gender for Development Uganda (G4DU) Programme that was launched by the European Union in 2023 to address several barriers to education among the most vulnerable adolescent girls in West Nile, Acholi, and Lango sub-regions.

The majority of the benefiting girls, all in Senior One (S.1), clad in blue t-shirts tucked in navy blue long skirts patiently waited for their turn to undergo the processes including verification of details alongside their parents, guardians or caregivers up to the last stage of receiving the cash.

"We have come here to receive support that will see my daughter stay in school. My wife and I are weak. I always emphasize that the future of the girl child is education. In the old days, fewer girls attained education. Right now, girls can do anything boys do. They are all equal. I really appreciate UNICEF and the donors that have given us this rare opportunity to keep our girls in school," Felix Nyeko explains.

Nyeko had accompanied his daughter, Linda, 16, to receive her cash for the second term secondary school education.

In her own words, Linda, who smiled throughout the interview, could not hide her excitement. According to her, UNICEF is a saviour. "Without UNICEF and the donors (European Union, Germany and Belgium governments) that have given us this money and mentorship sessions, I would be at home now."

Franka, who walks eight kilometres every day to and from Padibe Girls Comprehensive Secondary School was excited too.

"Part of the money I receive is for my fees. I use the remaining money to buy key essential items. Not many girls can afford these materials. I am happy and grateful to be part of this programme," says Franka standing beside her 80-year-old grandmother, Aber Jenny.

"If UNICEF and its partners were not here to support us, my granddaughter would not be in school because I am old as you can see me. I do not work. I am unable to afford the fees or buy everything she needs for her school," reveals Aber.

UNICEF aims to improve inclusive access and participation in schools for adolescent girls, including their transition to and retention in lower secondary level.

Led by the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Cash Plus Programme developed through a co-creative process will benefit 5,000 adolescent girls in seven districts in West Nile, Acholi and Lango sub regions (Adjumani, Yumbe, Nebbi, Kitgum, Madi-Okollo, Oyam and Lamwo districts) from Senior one (S.1) – Senior four (S.4) for a period of four years.



Catherine Ntabadde, UNICEF Uganda's Communication Specialist, interacts with the school bursar at Padibe Girls Comprehensive Secondary School, one of the G4DU Cashplus beneficiary schools in Lamwo District, as he receives school fees from one of the beneficiaries of the programme, accompanied by her grandmother. © UNICEF Uganda.



Lakica Franca Ajalo, a senior one learner poses for a portrait with her certificate at Padibe Girls Comprehensive Secondary School, one of the Gender for Development Uganda (G4DU) Cashplus beneficiary Schools in Lamwo District. © UNICEF Uganda

At Padibe Comprehensive and Lokung Secondary Schools, UNICEF Representative to Uganda Dr. Robin Nandy and Rosette Nyanzi from the Ministry of Education and Sports witnessed the disbursement of funds and handed over certificates to the girls benefiting from the programme.

Nandy interacted with the beneficiaries, their parents/guardians/caregivers and passed on words of encouragement as a father.

"Please take care of yourselves. You are responsible for your own future, your protection. Education is going to help you as you grow up. So, stay in school. It is a safe space. You will have time to do everything later, like going to work, getting married. It is not the right time now," says Nandy.

Before receiving their certificates, the girls at Padibe unanimously mentioned five examples of trouble that they need to stay away from to remain in school. These are: early child marriage, pregnancy, poverty, peer pressure/bad influence, dropping out of school.

At Lokung Secondary School, Robert Ochola the Board Chair briefed a team from UNICEF, Ministry of Education and Sports and Trailblazers Mentoring Foundation (TMF) about the progress and some challenges of the programme. TMF is a UNICEF partner supporting the implementation of the programme in the targeted secondary schools.

"This programme has accelerated enrolment, retention, and reduced school drop-outs. All the children registered in the school as beneficiaries returned for second term lessons apart from three who re-located to nearer schools," Ochola reveals. He requested to have eighteen vulnerable girls in the school benefit from the programme too. Ochola also called for increased parental engagement to change their mindset regarding the cash transfers they receive. "They think the money is to help them meet other domestic needs. When some parents receive the money, they walk away without paying the school fees," he further reveals.

To address this challenge, UNICEF, TMF and partners involved in the implementation have devised means to ensure that school bursars are available on the pay day to receive the school fees as soon as the learners and their parents/guardians receive the money.

Nandy appealed to the parents and guardians to do "everything you can to keep your girls in school." He pledged UNICEF's continued support together with other partners but reminded them of their primary obligation, to take care of their children.

Rosette Nyanzi, from the Ministry of Education and Sports congratulated the board of Lokung Secondary School for their involvement in the programme and the affairs of the school. Nyanzi took note of the challenges raised by the board chair Robert

Ochola including increased enrolment amidst limited school infrastructure and teachers, menstrual hygiene management. She advised the school administration to write to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education and Sports to follow up their request of including more teachers on the payroll.

Regarding infrastructure and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) facilities for girls in the school, Nyanzi explained that since the school is also benefiting from a World Bank funded programme, there is hope that these facilities shall be provided. On the menstrual hygiene management, Nyanzi explained that the ministry will explore collaborations with other partners to deal with the issue which affects several schools across the country.

The Cash Plus Programme does not operate in isolation, but is part of a broader education initiative, of the G4DU interventions implemented by other partners, particularly Enabel, Spotlight Initiative and KfW. To complement the cash support, the programme specifically delivers two critical plus interventions delivered through TMF. These include peer-to-peer mentorship and referral to services in the areas of health and protection.

As beneficiaries and their parents/guardians lined up at Lokung Secondary School to clear their school fees after receiving the second disbursement, it was clear that this support is making a difference in the lives of the most vulnerable girls.

Irene Anioo, 18, a beneficiary at Lokung says she is happy to continue receiving the money because she can stay in school. Her dream is to study hard to become a nurse to "help her family and country." 🌍

BUILDING BEYOND DEPENDENCY: – Women Entrepreneurs Drive Rural Transformation in South Western Uganda

By Brenda Luyiga, World Food Programme (WFP)



Caroline proudly holds up a glass of fresh juice—each one sells for UGX 2,000 and helps her group earn up to UGX 900,000 in sales every month.
© WFP/Brendah Luyiga



Sarafina attends to a client at her barbershop, a business she started using profits from her maize and bean harvests.
© WFP/Brendah Luyiga

In Uganda, over 1.9 million refugees and local communities struggle with limited market access, inadequate post-harvest knowledge, and food aid dependency. The World Food Programme's (WFP) Agriculture Market Support (AMS) programme, funded by the Mastercard Foundation, is transforming lives through skills training and collective marketing action. Since 2023, AMS has reached 101,000 participants, including 32,000 youth in 2024, with 60 percent being young women. Three women's journeys exemplify how entrepreneurship training can break dependency cycles and build sustainable livelihoods.

The Juice Maker of Rweiziringiro

Caroline, 29, is a member of the Rweiziringiro Youth Farmers group in Kaberere, Isingiro District. Her journey began with cooperative training from Ripple Effect, a WFP partner NGO on the AMS programme. The 30-member group initially struggled to select a single income-generating activity. "When tasked to specialise, we were divided!" she recalls. Inspired by a friend's success with sugarcane juice, Caroline advocated for a juice-making venture and convinced three friends to join her. WFP subsequently divided the group into three enterprises: silage production, aggregation, and juice making. This structure enhanced collaboration and diversified their income.

A Cut Above the Rest

At 24 years old, Sarafina, the daughter of Rwandan refugees, has transformed her life through agricultural entrepreneurship and strategic business diversification. Her journey began when she joined the Abajyamugambi Women's Savings Group in 2021, where she learned the power of collective bulking and resource pooling.

Through the group, Sarafina cultivated bean and maize crops, learning post-harvest management and entrepreneurship skills through the AMS programme. The programme taught them to bulk their produce collectively, enabling better price negotiations than individual sales would have allowed. "With collective buying, we can negotiate our prices better," explains Josephine, another group member, describing how they anticipate earning over UGX 2 million from maize harvests—nearly triple the amount from individual sales.



Anita's home market stall: transforming refugee resilience into daily nourishment and independence, providing her family with sustainable income and hope.
© WFP/Brendah Luyiga

With the agricultural foundation established, Sarafina used her bean and maize harvest earnings—raising UGX 900,000 (US\$250) through a group loan—to diversify into a long-held dream: opening a hair salon. Having received training from her brother years earlier, her salon aspirations had been on hold.

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“Without money to start my salon, I was forced to stay at home,” she recalls. Her agricultural success provided the capital base that made this secondary venture possible, especially during the off-season.

Today, Sarafina operates both agricultural and service businesses. She continues farming while serving up to 15 salon clients daily. The women's group has expanded beyond individual farming—in February 2025, WFP supported them with a milling machine, generating additional income and creating two jobs for other youth. The group now mills about 18 MT monthly, valued at UGX 2.7 million (US\$752) and averaging UGX 90,000 (US\$25) daily and was also provided the group with additional equipment, including a stitching machine, a weighing scale, a tricycle, and materials for a maize milling store.

The Lasting Footprint

Anita, a mother of four from Burundi, now a refugee in Uganda, shares her journey from dependency to independence. Her family relied on WFP food assistance and her husband's casual labour. Joining the Footprint Women refugee group in 2020 changed her life. Through AMS, they acquired financial skills and learned to collectively bulk “We were farmers, but we didn't know how to calculate profits or save,” Anita recalls. They leased land to farm beans and maize together.

With a group loan, Anita began selling tomatoes and onions, later expanding to rice, sugar, cooking oil, and diapers from her home stall—maximising savings by avoiding rent. She now earns UGX 8,000 to 10,000 daily, peaking at UGX 40,000, allowing her family to stop relying on WFP food aid and build a semi-permanent house in 2022.

By pooling resources, accessing markets, and starting their own enterprises, these three women are setting the benchmark for their communities. As Uganda faces a youth bulge, with over 75 per cent of the population under 30, these stories illustrate how support can turn challenges into opportunities, help reduce malnutrition, strengthen food systems, and empower the youth and women to face tomorrow. 🌍



UNODC AND PARTNERS COMMEMORATE NELSON MANDELA DAY AND BUILD STRONGER LOCAL ACTION TO PROTECT UGANDA'S WILDLIFE AND FORESTS

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



Members of the prison community perform a vibrant traditional dance during the commemoration of Nelson Mandela Day 2025. Engaging in activities such as music, dance, drama, and sports provides prisoners with opportunities to express emotions, build confidence, and strengthen social skills. © Uganda Prisons Service



Mr. Brian Mbazira (left), Officer in Charge of Luzira Upper Prison, inspect a football team before the sports tournament. © Uganda Prisons Service



A member of Uganda's National Anti-Wildlife Crime Coordination Task Force addressing participants during the awareness-raising meeting in Kikuube District.. © UNODC Uganda



Members of Uganda's National Anti-Wildlife Crime Coordination Task Force and staff of UNODC Uganda with the leadership of Kikuube District after a meeting on conservation of Bugoma Central Forest Reserve. © UNODC Uganda

To promote crime prevention, safeguard human rights, and strengthen the rule of law, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in partnership with Justice Defenders and the Uganda Prisons Service (UPS), organized a vibrant week-long celebration under the theme #PrisonersMatter – Time for Action.

The events, held from 21 to 25 July 2025 across Luzira Maximum, Luzira Women's, Luzira Remand, and Murchison Bay Prisons, brought together more than 5,000 prisoners, 30 prison officers, and invited guests. Through music, dance, drama, and sports, participants celebrated Nelson Mandela's values of dignity, fairness, and rehabilitation.

The observance of Nelson Mandela Day is dedicated to advancing human rights, social justice, and prisoner rehabilitation. It reflects the principles enshrined in the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, commonly known as the Nelson Mandela Rules. This commemoration also serves to enhance the skills of legal aid providers while underscoring the importance of protecting human rights and ensuring a fair, just criminal justice system.

Mr. Christopher Okware, Assistance Commissioner of Prisons, commended UNODC Uganda for its support across strategic areas of Uganda Prisons Service including access to justice, reintegration, and capacity building of staff. On his part, Mr. Brian Mbazira, Officer in Charge of Luzira Upper Prison, highlighted the inspiring story of Canaan Nkamuhabwa, who, after five years in prison, graduated from the University of London as a lawyer through the Justice Defenders programme. He encouraged prisoners to follow such examples and engage in rehabilitation programmes.

Mr. Anthony Makumbi, Justice Defenders Uganda Country Lead, delivered a message of hope, "You are not forgotten. You are not without value. You are not defined solely by your past. You are part of something powerful—a movement where prisoners become paralegals, advocates, leaders, and defenders of justice. We have seen many of you step into this calling with integrity, excellence, and deep compassion." The commemoration of the Nelson Mandela Day was undertaken under "Strengthening Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Uganda" programme being funded by the Government of the Netherlands.

As part of efforts to combat wildlife and forest crime, Uganda's National Anti-Wildlife Crime Coordination Task Force (NWCCTF), supported by UNODC in Uganda, engaged communities in Kikuube District near Bugoma Central Forest Reserve. The outreach, from 25th to 28th August 2025, focused on raising awareness about biodiversity conservation and fostering stronger community action to protect Uganda's wildlife and forests. The NWCCTF is an umbrella body comprising of 14 law enforcement agencies established in 2018 with the overall mission to promote inter-agency cooperation and coordination to combat wildlife and forest crime in Uganda. 🌍

YOUNG VOICES POWER UGANDA'S ENERGY TRANSITION DIALOGUE

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



Ugandan Youth changemakers after the dialogue on the UN Secretary-General's landmark Address on "A Moment of Opportunity: Supercharging The Clean Energy Age" at the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Kampala, 22 July 2025 © UN Uganda

As the world hurtles toward a climate tipping point, Uganda's youth are stepping onto the frontline of the energy transition, demanding bold action and offering fresh solutions. In a vibrant, youth-led dialogue hosted at the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Kampala, young changemakers voiced their hopes, concerns, and innovative ideas—energized by the launch of the UN Secretary-General's new report: "Seizing the Moment of Opportunity" on 22 July 2025

The dialogue followed the global release of the UN Secretary-General António Guterres' address, which calls on world leaders to end fossil fuel subsidies, triple renewable energy investments, and deliver a just and inclusive energy transition. His message was clear: the clean energy revolution is already underway, but it's not moving fast enough—or fairly enough.

"Fossil fuels are running out of road. The sun is rising on a clean energy age," Guterres declared.

"This is not just a shift in power. It is a shift in possibility," he added.



Ugandan Climate Activist Robert Turyakira moderating Youth Dialogue on the UN Secretary-General's landmark Address on "A Moment of Opportunity: Supercharging The Clean Energy Age" at the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Kampala, 22 July 2025 © UN Uganda

In this spirit, the Kampala dialogue brought together youth leaders and development actors to reflect on Uganda's role in this global transformation. The discussion emphasized the need to accelerate implementation, especially as Africa still accounts for only 1.5% of global renewable energy capacity despite being home to 60% of the world's best solar resources



Ugandan Youth changemakers during the dialogue on the UN Secretary-General's landmark Address on "A Moment of Opportunity: Supercharging The Clean Energy Age" at the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Kampala, 22 July 2025 © UN Uganda

Uganda has made strides—adopting a progressive Climate Change Act and supporting renewable energy development—but challenges remain. Over 500 million people across Africa still lack electricity, and even within Uganda, energy access remains uneven. The transition must therefore be both green and just ensuring that no community is left behind.

"Access to electricity is not a luxury—it's a precondition for participation in the future economy," said Tom Sengalama, Head of Unit, Nature, Climate, Energy and Resilience at UNDP Uganda.

During the plenary, youth raised powerful points. They challenged the assumption that the transition must be linear, and instead advocated for context-specific strategies. Some called for using existing extractive resources, like oil and critical minerals, to responsibly fund a greener future—reflecting the geopolitical and financial complexities African countries face.

"Can we responsibly use what we have to build the clean future we want?" one young innovator asked.

"The billions pledged for climate action remain out of reach. Where can youth actually access these funds?" another participant added.

There was also a strong call to decentralize climate innovation—bringing resources and conversations beyond urban centers. Rural youth have ideas, participants argued, but are often excluded from funding and platforms.

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"Communities must stop seeing climate change as someone else's problem—it affects all of us," a speaker urged, stressing the need for grassroots education and storytelling.

Youth also highlighted barriers such as limited financing for youth-led energy startups, lack of data access, and exclusion from key decision-making forums. They called for targeted policies that support youth entrepreneurship in renewable energy, skills development, and technology transfer.

The dialogue underscored that Uganda's transition must be not only green but also just and inclusive, ensuring that vulnerable populations—especially women, refugees, and rural communities—are not left behind.

The dialogue closed with an inspiring message to the youth: "Remain hopeful, stay engaged, and continue driving innovation" said Issa Conteh, Head of Office, UN Resident Coordinator's Office. The UN in Uganda committed to sustaining this momentum through ongoing engagement platforms and creative partnerships that bridge policy, entrepreneurship, and community action.

Uganda's energy transition will not be powered by technology alone—it will be driven by people. And young people are leading the way. 🌍

FAO BOOSTS WOMEN'S CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN KATAKWI AND KABERAMAIDO

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



Christine Acen cooking with biogas in her kitchen in Apiira Village, Katakwi District. With support from FAO under the Norway-funded climate resilience project, she has adopted a flexi-biogas system, energy-saving cookstove, and briquette-making to reduce smoke, save money, and protect forests. © FAO/Violet Namata

In Apiira Village, Katakwi District, the warm smile of Christine Acen, 49, a member of Apiira Women Farmer Field School (FFS), welcomes us into her home. She proudly leads the way to her kitchen, a space now transformed into a clean, smoke-free environment, in sharp contrast to the traditional three-stone firewood setups common in rural Uganda.

"Before, my kitchen was filled with smoke, and cooking was always a struggle," Acen recalls.

Today, thanks to support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Acen's kitchen tells a different story. Through the installation of a flexi-biogas system, and training on its operation and maintenance, Acen has embraced a safer, healthier, and more efficient way of cooking.

"With just one basin of cow dung, I can generate enough biogas to cook for two days," she explains.

The biogas system has significantly eased Acen's workload, reducing the need for long walks to collect firewood, minimizing exposure to indoor air pollution, and lowering household energy expenses.

"Previously, I spent about 6,000 UGX every week on charcoal and firewood. Now, I hardly spend anything. I save that money for school fees and invest in small livestock to diversify my income," she says.

The benefits extend beyond the kitchen. The organic slurry produced by the biogas system serves as a rich fertilizer for her kitchen garden. "My vegetables are thriving, and my children now have access to nutritious, homegrown greens," Acen notes.

In addition to biogas, FAO trained Acen in the construction and use of an energy-saving cookstove, an efficient, environmentally friendly alternative to the traditional open fire. Built from locally available materials such as soil, clay, dry grass, and water, the stove uses up to 50% less firewood, reduces smoke emissions, and enables simultaneous cooking on two plates, saving both time and fuel.

"With this stove, I only need two small sticks of firewood to prepare a full meal. Before, I would have used an entire bundle," Acen explains.

Acen has also adopted briquette-making, another innovation promoted by FAO. By using maize cobs to produce briquettes, she further reduces reliance on firewood, contributing to forest conservation and providing an affordable energy source for her household.

Across Katakwi District, Christine Acham, a widow and mother of six from Abaratakere FFS in Apeleun Village, shares a similar experience. After receiving a biogas system in 2024, her kitchen is now free of harmful smoke, leading to notable improvements in her health and finances.

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"Before, I coughed constantly from smoke exposure. Now, I cook without any problems," Acham shares. "I also save about 10,000 UGX weekly, which I now use to buy chickens that bring additional income."



Christine Acham, a widow and member of Abaratakere Farmer Field School in Apeleun Village, Katakwi District, prepares a meal on her energy-saving cookstove. Supported by FAO, she uses biogas and sustainable fuels to cut household costs and improve her health. © FAO/Violet Namata

These interventions are part of FAO's broader initiative to promote sustainable, climate-smart energy solutions in the Teso Sub-region. Under the Norway-funded project "Building Climate Resilience for Food and Nutrition Security of Smallholder Farming Households in Katakwi and Kaberamaido Districts", FAO is piloting flexible biogas systems in 20 households and introducing energy-saving cookstoves to over 2,500 households.

The flexi-biogas system, suited for smallholder farmers with one or two cows, requires only 10 kilograms of manure to generate sufficient biogas for household energy needs. In addition to providing clean cooking energy, the system supports soil fertility enhancement through the production of organic fertiliser, contributing to improved crop yields and diversified nutrition.

By reducing the need for firewood, the biogas system helps cut greenhouse gas emissions by approximately one ton of carbon dioxide equivalent per person annually, supporting both climate change mitigation and forest conservation goals.

Flexi-biogas and energy-saving cookstove technologies are empowering women like Acen and Acham to live healthier lives, strengthen household resilience, and secure sustainable livelihoods.

"When organisations like FAO introduce new technologies, we must embrace them and apply the knowledge," Acen advises.

Through these interventions, FAO, with support from the Government of Norway, is advancing climate-smart agriculture and promoting sustainable energy transitions and ensuring that smallholder farming communities are better prepared to face the challenges of a changing climate. 🌍



Christine Acen showcases fresh vegetables harvested from her kitchen garden in Katakwi District. With support from FAO, she adopted climate-smart practices to improve household nutrition and food security. © FAO/Violet Namata

WHO SUPPORTS FILOVIRUS FULL-SCALE RESPONSE SIMULATION EXERCISE FOR THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY MEDICAL TEAM

By Anthony Bugembe, World Health Organization (WHO)



Simulated evacuation of a highly infectious patient using the EpiShuttle. © WHO

The Ministry of Health, with support from the World Health Organization (WHO) through funding from the European Union's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG-ECHO), successfully concluded a weeklong full-scale simulation exercise aimed at strengthening Uganda's emergency health response capabilities.

Held from 14–18 July 2025 in Jinja City, the exercise focused on the use of the innovative Infectious Disease Treatment Module (IDTM) for managing viral haemorrhagic fevers, including Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). The simulation tested the ability of Uganda's National Emergency Medical Team (nEMT) to rapidly deploy and operate the IDTM during a simulated outbreak.

The exercise was designed and implemented under the INITIATE² project, a global partnership co-managed by WHO and World Food Programme (WFP). Other partners in the simulation exercise include University Hospital Tübingen, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), UNICEF, the Makerere University Infectious Diseases Institute, and Africa Centers for Disease Control.

"Public health emergencies can quickly overwhelm the local health systems, necessitating additional support. Fortunately, Uganda has built the national EMT consisting of health workers from various parts of the country, who understand the local context and are readily deployable to support affected communities," said Dr. Charles Olaro, Director General Health Services, Ministry of Health.

Seventy-five EMT members, along with health workers from the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) and Uganda Police Force (UPF), participated in the simulation. The scenario replicated the detection, investigation, and response to a localized Ebola outbreak and included practical exercises in optimized clinical care, infection prevention and control, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), logistics, psychosocial support, and safe and dignified burials.

A critical component of the simulation was testing the international medical evacuation protocol, coordinated by WHO teams in Uganda, the African Region, and Geneva. The Uganda Police Air Wing supported the air evacuation using an epishuttle device.



Simulated evacuation of an Ebola patient. © WHO



Simulated evacuation of a highly infectious patient using the EpiShuttle. © WHO

"This simulation provided a realistic platform for testing field coordination, clinical operations, logistics, and inter-agency collaboration under emergency conditions," said Dr Kasonde Mwinga, WHO Representative to Uganda. "It has also enabled hands-on capacity building for Uganda's Emergency Medical Team."

The national EMT, first established during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 with WHO support, currently includes 178 trained health professionals. The team has since responded to outbreaks such as Ebola, mpox and measles. In July 2024, the Ministry of Health approved a national EMT roadmap to guide further capacity building, aligned with the WHO global EMT initiative.

The simulation exercise underscored the importance of standardized protocols and the need for teams to be regularly trained on them. It also highlighted the logistical gaps for national Emergency Medical teams, and the importance of collaborations in addressing these challenges. The success of this simulation highlights Uganda's growing leadership in health emergency preparedness and the power of global collaboration in strengthening health systems. 🌍



SAVING TIME, SAVING LIVES: The Ambulance Services App

By Jacqueline Faith Mpeni, United Nations Regional Service Centre Entebbe (RSCE)



A private Ambulance carrying a MEDEVAC patient upon arrival at Entebbe International Airport
© UNDSS Entebbe/ David Ocendi



A UN Ambulance being prepared to receive a MEDEVAC patient at Entebbe International Airport
© UNDSS Entebbe/ David Ocendi

Commenting after the launch of the App, Aviation Security Manager Brigadier General Mike Samuel Kisame stated: "This is a critical App, and it is useful, it will significantly enhance our coordination during medical evacuations."

Before the App, the MEDEVAC process was semi-manual and time-consuming. medical personnel had to email requests, wait for memo approvals, physically collect signed documents, and deliver them to AVSEC for further authorization, often taking 3–4 hours.

The Ambulance Services App digitizes the entire approval chain. Approvals are completed online, often within minutes, and memos are automatically generated and routed to the appropriate approvers. "Medical personnel no longer need to physically move to the approvers in UN Security or UCAA. They go to the facilitation desk where the officer is already expecting to support them," Mr. Ochieng emphasized.

The time-sensitive nature of medical emergencies, especially casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) and MEDEVAC are designed to respond to life or limb threatening conditions. Delays of even a few hours can drastically reduce survival chances. It is therefore important to have rapid approvals which trigger coordinated responses from aviation, security and medical teams to get the personnel the required treatment in time and this is what his App delivers.

UNDSS in Entebbe, the business owner conceived the idea that was developed by the RFTS with lead developer Mr. Abbey Mbirizi. The App was built in collaboration with UCAA, MONUSCO Medical Section, and partner hospitals in Kampala.

Since its launch in July, the Ambulance Services App has been actively used, averaging two medical evacuations per day. Feedback from users has been overwhelmingly positive with effective and efficient clearances.

The App is also being adapted for broader emergency crisis management scenarios with future enhancements to include automated background checks for hospitals, ambulances, and crew. 🌍

In a major step forward in coordinating and handling emergency medical situations, United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) in Entebbe, in partnership with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in Entebbe, Uganda Civil Aviation Authority (UCAA), and Regional Field Technology Service (RFTS), have successfully launched the Ambulance Services App. This is a secure digital platform designed to streamline and expedite medical evacuations (MEDEVAC) at Entebbe International Airport.

"The primary objective of the Ambulance Services App is the efficient facilitation of medical workers and their ambulance to collect or deliver MEDEVAC patients from Entebbe International Airport, while still maintaining security," said Mr. George Ochieng, Associate Security Coordination Officer, UNDSS.

The App was piloted over a six-month period in Entebbe, with phased testing across different segments of the process. It involved the UN Regional Service Centre Entebbe (RSCE), MONUSCO medical teams, and UCAA's Aviation Security (AVSEC).

BREAKING BARRIERS: How Healthcare Training is Transforming Care for Trans and Gender-Diverse Ugandans

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



Health Care Providers during the training session in Jinja
© UNAIDS Uganda



Health Care Providers during the training session in Jinja
© UNAIDS Uganda

Sarah Nangobi (not her real name) is a nurse at a public health centre in Jinja, one of Uganda’s bustling commercial hubs. Like many healthcare workers across the country, she has encountered trans and gender-diverse patients seeking care. But today, her response is very different from what it used to be.

“I used to feel confused when someone’s appearance didn’t match their national ID,” Nangobi recalls. “I didn’t know how to address them, and sometimes I would refer them elsewhere because I was uncomfortable.”

Her experience is not unique. Across Uganda, many medical personnel struggle to provide inclusive care to trans and gender-diverse patients. The reasons range from limited knowledge and cultural biases to institutional barriers that leave both providers and patients feeling alienated.

To address this gap, Tranz Network Uganda (TNU) with support from UNAIDS under the Working in Solidarity with LGBTIQ+ Communities project conducted training sessions in Jinja and Kampala. The sessions equipped 50 healthcare workers from all regions of the country with the tools to offer respectful, rights-based, and culturally sensitive care. The goal was to ensure that every patient, regardless of gender identity, is treated with dignity.

This intervention couldn’t be more timely. In Uganda, trans and gender-diverse individuals face significant barriers to healthcare. Discrimination, stigma, and denial of services are common. A 2025 study by TNU revealed that 58% of trans and gender-diverse Ugandans have experienced healthcare discrimination.

These challenges are compounded by elevated health risks, including HIV, mental health issues, and other complications. Yet many avoid seeking care altogether fearing ridicule, rejection, or worse.

The Ministry of Health recently reaffirmed that no one should be denied healthcare based on gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other status. The Patient Rights and Responsibilities Charter (2019) echoes this, guaranteeing impartial access to treatment and protection against discrimination.

Despite these policies, the healthcare system often fails to serve marginalised communities inclusively. That’s why TNU’s training focused not just on medical knowledge, but on empathy, respect, and understanding.

“Healthcare providers play a vital role in ensuring that every person can access quality care with dignity,” said a TNU programme coordinator. “Building knowledge and empathy among frontline workers helps break down the barriers that prevent trans and gender-diverse people from seeking care.”

During follow-up discussions in Jinja, Nangobi shared her reflections: “We need to remember that behind every patient is a human being deserving of our care and respect. When we create a welcoming environment, people are more likely to seek help early, which leads to better health outcomes for everyone.”

She believes that healthcare providers must take the initiative to learn about inclusive care, rather than waiting for trans patients to educate them.

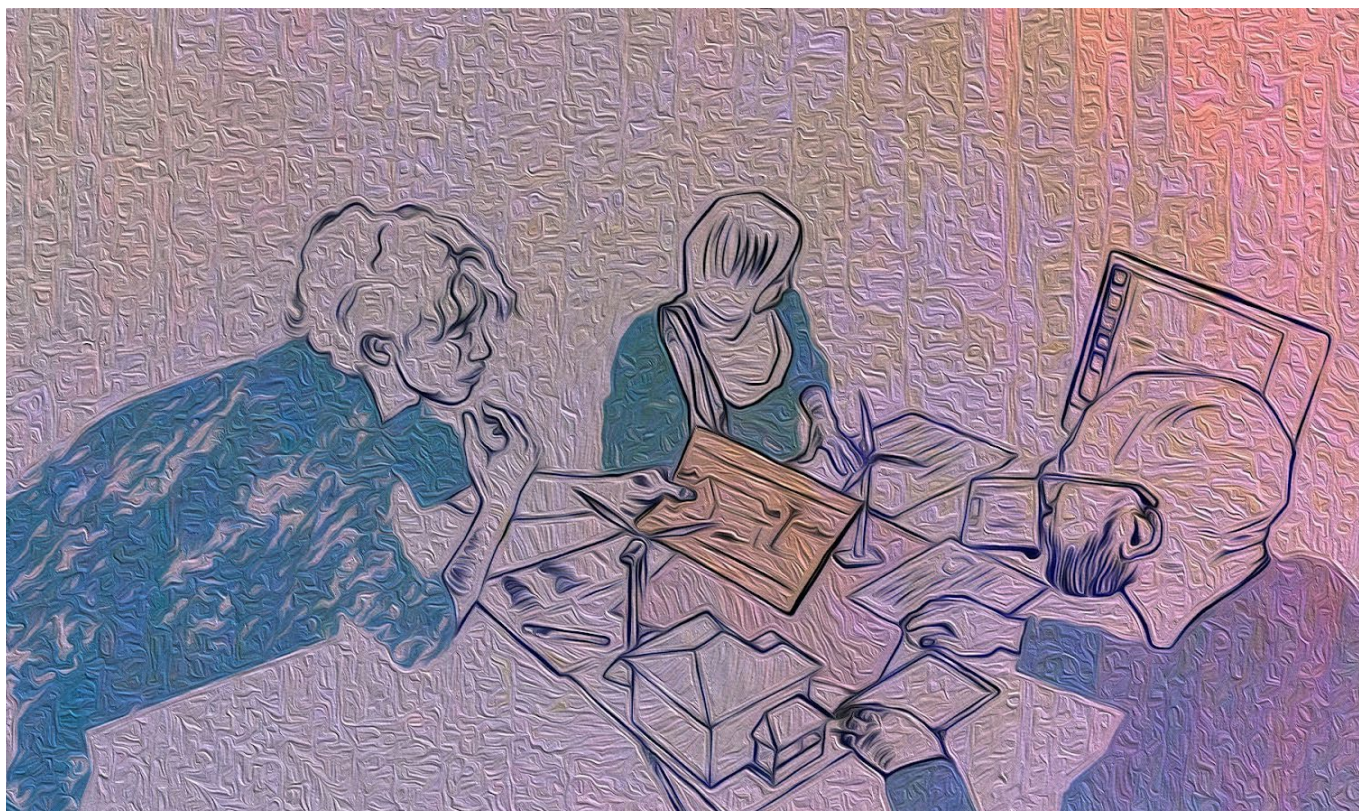
By the end of the training, participants committed to building trans-inclusive services through mentorship, stronger community partnerships, and collaboration with the Ministry of Health to improve policies and practices.

“Health is a human right,” one provider reflected. “And that right should not be limited by how you identify.” 🌈



ACTIVATING AN INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM THROUGH FORESIGHT

By Minke Meijnders, Tiina Neuvonen and Marian Muyingo, United Nations Global Pulse (UNGP)



© Derrick Kaliisa Mugenyi/UN Global Pulse

Strategic foresight, championed under the UN 2.0 agenda, helps organizations navigate uncertainty by thinking ahead. Foresight workshops are often filled with exercises that prompt participants to challenge assumptions and envision divergent futures. Yet, true excitement comes when those ideas are transformed into actionable projects.

This unfolded during the Uganda Future of Tourism 2040 foresight workshop convened by the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities (MTWA) and facilitated by UN Global Pulse. Sixty key stakeholders gathered in Jinja to surface transformative opportunities, align around a shared vision, and design pathways leading to a coordinated portfolio of projects for the future of tourism.

A Methodology for Collaboration and Action

The workshop leveraged participatory foresight, designed not only to imagine futures but to mobilise a broad stakeholder group—ministries, district officials, entrepreneurs, and researchers—for collective impact.

The method emphasised:

- Imagining transformative changes;
- Identifying practical entry points for experimentation;
- Building cross-sector alignment across ministries, districts, private sector, and communities.

The journey unfolded in three stages:

1. **Opportunity Mapping:** uncovering overlooked opportunities.
2. **Visioning and Pathway Design:** defining a shared direction and required changes.
3. **Project Framing and Portfolio Design:** translating ideas into coordinated projects.

Surfacing Transformative Opportunities

Participants began by identifying “blind-spot opportunities.” Suggestions included diversifying tourism into wellness, cultural, and agrotourism; using AI and data to empower local storytellers; and improving destination visibility. These, alongside sustainability, access, and digital infrastructure.

By combining such ideas with existing sector priorities, participants focused on opportunities with the greatest transformative potential for Uganda's tourism trajectory.

Visioning and Pathway Design

Participants co-created a shared vision:

"Uganda Tourism in 2040: A preferred smart tourism destination that is secure, connected, and driven by data, innovation, and authentic Ugandan experiences."

This vision guided the alignment of ongoing initiatives with future ambitions. Transformation stories were developed at regional, national, and sub-national levels. For instance, a sub-national story envisioned communities fully equipped with digital skills to tell their stories and host tourists. To achieve this, universal internet access would be needed by 2030, followed by digital training for tourism officers and leaders, paving the way for smart tourism hubs by 2035.

These narratives made the 2040 vision tangible, while mapping the step-by-step changes required along the way.

From Ideas to Portfolio Design

To translate vision into action, participants drafted eight project pitches linked to transformation stories. They mapped existing stakeholders and initiatives to avoid duplication and foster synergies. The goal was to ensure projects reinforced each other toward system-wide transformation.

Project teams pitched in a **"Dragon's Den"** style, defending feasibility, impact, and scalability before a panel of judges. The result was a coordinated portfolio of activities rooted in the shared vision.

Why It Worked (and What Could Be Improved)

The workshop was a milestone in Uganda's journey to becoming a smart, inclusive tourism destination. As Martin Gordon Mubangizi, Head of UN Global Pulse Uganda, noted, participants built early consensus and shared commitment beyond drafting a vision.

Success was enabled by:

Structure and creativity: A balance between open imagination and structured outputs.

Inclusive ownership: Equal voice for policymakers, district officials, and communities.

System-level focus: Efforts aimed at reinforcing each other for wider transformation.

Future iterations could benefit from deeper pre-workshop mapping of stakeholders and projects. This would strengthen alignment with existing initiatives and highlight critical gaps.

Looking Ahead

The foundation is now in place: a coalition of motivated change-makers committed to transforming Uganda's tourism sector. Outputs from the workshop are already shaping national efforts, such as the development of Uganda's next Tourism Master Plan.



MTWA and UN Global Pulse Uganda are also organising monthly stakeholder breakfasts and field visits to strengthen collaboration. As Commissioner Vivian Lyazi aptly stated: "We need smarter partnerships, stronger marketing, and innovative technology to take tourism to the next level."

These ongoing initiatives underscore the commitment to a robust, dynamic sector. More importantly, they represent a collective effort to realise Uganda's ambition of becoming Africa's preferred smart tourism destination by 2040. 🌍



PLANTING HOPE, CHANGING LIVES

By Jaturpon Lee and Daniel Ssozi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)



Ajelina Ihatar, a South Sudanese new arrival at the Lokung Collection Point displays some of the eggplant seedlings that are to be replanted in the main garden as part of the Kitchen Gardening Initiative at the collection point. © UNHCR/Ssozi Mukasa Daniel.

In the heart of Lamwo District, Northern Uganda, Lokung Collection Point serves as the first stop for South Sudanese refugees fleeing conflict and instability.

Here, they are registered, receive documentation, and access basic services before being relocated to Palabek Refugee Settlement to rebuild their lives.

But with dwindling resources especially human and financial resources, refugees are spending longer periods at the collection point. This extended stay, coupled with limited food diversity and uncertainty about the future, has taken a toll on both physical and mental well-being.

Recognizing these challenges, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), together with UNHCR and partners namely Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns (VEDCO), FH Association, Uganda Refugee and Disaster Management Council (URDMC), World Vision, CESVI, World Food Programme (WFP), Sustainable Agriculture for Rural Development Network (SARD-Net), Seed Effect, Thrive Gulu, ZOA, Ayuda en Acción and Lutheran World Federation (LWF) joined hands to launch a simple yet transformative initiative - kitchen gardening.



A group of South Sudanese new arrivals transplant eggplant seedlings from the nursery bed in preparation for replanting in the main garden at the Lokung Collection Point. The Kitchen Gardening Initiative provides fast-growing crops like vegetables to new arrivals at the collection point to supplement their meals during their stay. © UNHCR/Ssozi Mukasa Daniel.



A group of newly arrived South Sudanese refugees together with UNHCR Team Leader in Lamwo, Jatuporn Lee (in UNHCR T shirt) present some of their eggplant seedlings intended for replanting in the main garden at the Lokung Collection Point. The Lokung Collection Point serves as a reception centre for arriving refugees from South Sudan before they are relocated to Palabek Refugee Settlement. © UNHCR/Ssozi Mukasa Daniel.

What began as a small pilot has into a vibrant space where newly arrived refugees cultivate nutritious crops like eggplants, okra, kale, cow pea and sweet potatoes. These gardens not only supplement limited food rations but also offer therapeutic benefits, reducing stress, fostering a sense of purpose, and encouraging peaceful coexistence among diverse groups.

"This farming space is good for us because it provides food. When I move to the settlement, I plan to start my own garden and grow some of these crops as well. When I see the plants grow, I feel like I'm growing too," said Angelina, a refugee from Ikotos, Central Equatoria, South Sudan.

The initiative introduces the concept of self-reliance early in the refugee journey by involving refugees in cultivating their own food. This approach lays the foundation for sustainable living as individuals transition to settlement life.

The kitchen gardens provide more than just nourishment; they become a source of dignity, healing, and hope for those rebuilding their lives.

In a context defined by upheaval and uncertainty, the kitchen gardens at Lokung Collection Point are playing a transformative role — nurturing not just bodies but also minds and futures. 🌈



DE-RISKING EARLY-STAGE AGRIBUSINESSES TO CATALYSE INVESTMENT IN UGANDA'S AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

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



Sam Aderubo, Director of Honey Pride at Honey Pride's production centre in Arua, Uganda. A START concessional loan helped grow the business into a thriving honey value chain supporting beekeepers across West Nile, in Northern Uganda © UN News/Hisae Kawamori



Teopista Amony, employee at Sunrise Agro-processing, at Sunrise's sunflower facility in Lira, Uganda. With START financing, the company expanded production and created jobs for over 3,000 youth and women farmers © UNCDF Uganda

In Uganda, businesses in the agricultural sector face significant constraints to grow due to limited internal capital and restricted access to formal financial systems.

The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) with funding from the European Union Delegation, is working to catalyse investment in the sector by unlocking access to commercial capital for promising agribusinesses. Through a new partnership with Aceli Africa, UNCDF is helping de-risk investment and support enterprise growth.

The Support to Agricultural Revitalization and Transformation (START) Facility, which was designed by UNCDF and is implemented in partnership with Private Sector Foundation Uganda (PSFU) and Uganda Development Bank Ltd (UDB), aims to extend lessons learned in delivering financial solutions to agribusinesses in northern Uganda nationwide and transform US\$2 million in grant financing to leverage Aceli resources and networks to unlock commercial loans worth an anticipated US\$20 million.

"When START came, we were struggling to meet growing market demand," says Sam Aderubo, Director of Honey Pride Arua, a honey producer in Northern Uganda that used a concessional loan from UNCDF to invest in new machinery to boost production and improve honey quality. "We've opened up new markets, but to sustain them, we need additional financing. We're applying for START II to help us keep up with demand and improve productivity."

Shifting Risk, Unlocking Growth

UNCDF supports market development in high-risk environments by deploying catalytic concessional capital and risk-absorbing instruments to de-risk investments and shift the risk profile of early-stage markets. In Uganda, this approach is helping unlock affordable finance for tens of thousands of small and medium sized agribusinesses.

"In Uganda, as in much of Africa, the agricultural sector remains the backbone of the national economy, the main employer in the labour market and the basis of most household incomes," said Omon Ukpoma-Olaiya, Regional Investment Team Lead at UNCDF. "We aim to unlock the investment potential in the agricul-

tural sector through access to the catalytic capital businesses need – not just to survive, but to thrive and be a driving force in Uganda's national economic development. Through this strategic partnership, we are also prioritizing access to affordable investment capital to people in underserved communities such as rural entrepreneurs, women, youth and persons with disabilities."

Aceli Africa, a nonprofit market catalyst, is working with UNCDF under START II to bridge the gap between agribusiness SMEs and financial institutions. Using a mix of portfolio first-loss coverage and origination incentives, Aceli helps commercial lenders and impact investors reduce the risk and cost of serving high-potential but underserved SMEs.

With support from UNCDF, Aceli is targeting loans to SMEs in rural and frontier markets worth between UGX 36 million and UGX 900 million, approximately US\$10,000 - US\$250,000. The US\$2 million grant from UNCDF is expected to unlock 10 times its value in commercial loans to 200 agribusiness SMEs, reaching 75,000 smallholder farmers, at least 30% of which will be women-led businesses.

"There's a massive divide between the demand for capital in the agricultural sector across Africa - including in Uganda - and the availability of affordable capital that can enable businesses to meet their potential," said Brian Milder, Founder and CEO of Aceli Africa. "We're excited to be working with UNCDF to bridge that divide by addressing the real and perceived risks that prevent commercial lenders from entering this space and contributing to the inclusive growth of the Ugandan agricultural sector."

JENINAH'S JOURNEY: Finding Opportunity Beyond Disability

By Simon Peter Esaku, Ripple Effect (implementing partner of the International Labour Organization - ILO)

At first glance, it is not obvious that she is a Person with Disability (PWD). But Jeninah shares her story with quiet strength: “After I delivered my third child in 1995, I developed pain in the bones from the hips right up to the feet. It incapacitated me from doing heavy manual work.”

Jeninah and her husband, Robert Turyahebwa, 63, have eight children, aged 12 to 35. With her condition, Jeninah has been limited to light domestic chores, while Robert and their younger children do most of the farming. Life changed for Jeninah when Ripple Effect, a livelihoods NGO, came to their village in 2022. “I saw Rolland Atwiine and Nathan Namanya. They came to sensitise the community about a new project they called Soybean Value Chain Project,” she recalls.

The project, funded by the International Labour Organization (ILO) under its PROSPECTS Programme funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, operates in refugee settlements and host communities across Isingiro district. It aims to boost household incomes through training, input access, and improved marketing channels.

Jeninah joined the initiative and helped form the Kyakabindi Disabled Development Group in September 2022. Out of 30 members, 16 are PWDs, 22 are women, and 8 are youth. “We learned how to grow soybean, and how to make soybean products including half-cakes, soy milk, soy meat and soy biscuits,” Jeninah says proudly. “Even how to make shoes. I am waiting to buy a machine.”

Through the project, the group was linked to government departments and private companies. They received training on farming practices, business dynamics, savings, and value addition. Support included soybean seeds, drying tarpaulins, and equipment for baking. They were also registered at sub-county and district levels to formalize their activities.

Jeninah received 10 kilograms of improved soybean seeds in early 2023. Though dry spells affected her harvests, she earned 126,000 shillings (about US\$35) the first season and just 25 kg in the last, she found a new path, baking. Importantly, she uses soya flour as one of the main ingredients in her half-cakes. “I make 480 half-cakes a day, which bring in about 145,000 shillings (US\$40),” she shares. Her children distribute them to local restaurants and shops, earning commission.

With her earnings, Jeninah pays tuition for her four youngest children and supports four grandchildren. “I even hired land for planting and bought two goats and two ducks,” she says. She is also saving toward buying a plot in the trading centre, where she dreams of expanding her business.



“

“I plan to build semi-permanent structures for my children to do large scale half-cake business.”

Her husband, Robert, confirms the change. “We grow bananas, maize, beans, and tomatoes. The nutrition has improved.” Jeninah’s savings have reached 300,000 shillings (US\$80). “Because of saving, I can borrow to invest and pay back,” she explains.

Vincent Matsiko, the district commercial officer, highlights the broader impact. “The soybean project has enabled the participants to engage in production and value addition which has earned them additional income.” For Jeninah, the most meaningful aspect is inclusion. “Since I can’t do heavy work, making half-cakes is good employment for me. When I heard that the project includes people with disabilities, I was very happy,” she says.

Looking ahead, Jeninah envisions training others in baking and turning her home-grown success into a community-wide opportunity. Her story stands as a testament to how inclusive development initiatives can transform lives, and how determination can find its own path to success. 🌍

UGANDA MINISTER URGES MORE COLLECTIVE ACTION AGAINST CRIME ON LAKE VICTORIA

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



Gen. David Muhoozi, State Minister for Internal Affairs (front row, 5th from left), and other guests pose for a group photo after the official opening of the 5th Regional Working Group Meeting at Speke Resort Munyonyo on 15 July 2025. © IOM Uganda/JoyceNakato

Uganda's State Minister for Internal Affairs, Gen. David Muhoozi, has called for enhanced regional cooperation to combat transnational crime on Lake Victoria. Addressing a regional meeting in Kampala recently, the Minister stressed that the cross-border nature of organized crime meant that Uganda, Kenya, or Tanzania could not tackle it in silos.

"Our strength lies in partnerships, intelligence sharing, regular meetings, benchmarking best practices, capacity building, and harmonized legal frameworks," Gen. Muhoozi said, 15 July 2025.

The Minister spoke during the opening of the 5th meeting of the Regional Working Group (RWG) under IOM's project addressing transnational threats on Lake Victoria. The meeting featured leaders and officers from border agencies in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.

The RWG is a collaborative platform under the project titled: "Countering Transnational Threats on Lake Victoria by Enhancing Border Security Capacities and Coordination between Authorities in Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania". The project is implemented by IOM in collaboration with the governments of the three East African countries, funded by the US Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).

Lake Victoria is a transboundary resource shared between three countries, supporting livelihoods of an estimated 40 million people. However, its vastness makes it vulnerable to organized transnational crimes like theft, smuggling, human and drug trafficking, and illegal fishing - all of which threaten regional stability and fuel criminal networks with global reach.

The biannual RWG meetings offer the government delegates a chance to review their joint actions, address obstacles, and renew their commitment to common actions to protect the shared resource. At the start of the proceedings, Uganda formally took over from Kenya as the chair of the RWG.

By investing in regional maritime security in East Africa, the US is taking proactive steps to stop threats before they reach its borders. Strengthening

Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania's ability to secure Lake Victoria translates into fewer crimes and threats making their way into global criminal supply chains.

Mr. Sanusi Tejan Savage, IOM Uganda Chief of Mission, said: "We have a powerful advantage: our ability to act together. This is not just about East Africa's borders, it is about the global fight against organized crime."

With the three-year project set to end within months, Ms. Evelyn Cheluget, Kenya Director General of Immigration Services, emphasized the importance of long-term commitment. "It is imperative that we safeguard the progress and achievements registered so far," she said.

The Tanzanian Head of Delegation, Mr. Seperatus Rwelamila Fella, echoed this sentiment, calling for deepened cooperation, including joint capacity-building initiatives. No country, he said, can win this fight alone.

Uganda Immigration Assistant Commissioner Marcellino Bwesigye Kyamutetera, Head of the Ugandan Delegation, admitted that "transnational problems require transnational solutions", calling for more integration in border management, joint operations, and legal cooperation across borders.

At the end of the 3-day meeting, key recommendations included strengthening joint training and capacity building for border officials, enhancing cross-border operations, and increasing intelligence sharing. Community engagement and sensitization of local populations along the Lake Victoria shoreline are also crucial to combating transnational crime.

Delegates also visited the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre in Entebbe, gaining first-hand insight into Uganda's search and rescue operations on Lake Victoria. The visit reinforced the value of technical capacity, operational readiness, and inter-agency cooperation. 🌍

SOLARIZING UGANDA'S BORDER POSTS: A STEP TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, PEACE AND RESILIENCE

By Joel Akena, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)



Cyanika Boarder, Kisoro District to Cyanika Border Post, Kisoro District

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with the Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Internal Affairs, has successfully solarized the border posts of Amudat, Cyanika, Kizinga, Kikagati, Lia, and Vurra, with installation currently underway at Lwakhakha.

Originally initiated to ensure business continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic, this project also addresses the broader need for efficient and uninterrupted service delivery at key border points. It contributes to sustainable development by providing affordable, clean energy solutions and promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions. This transformation improves service delivery for users - the people of Uganda, and neighbouring regions, while recognizing that stable societies are essential for long-term energy investments and sustainable infrastructure development.

Speaking during the launch event on 10 July 2025, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Lt. Gen. Joseph Musanyufu, expressed his appreciation for the continued support from UNDP, which provided various equipment such laptops, call centre and teleconferencing systems, highlighting that these

contributions have significantly improved workflows within the Public Service Institution. "By lighting our borders and ensuring stable and sustainable power supply at border facilities, this intervention enhances institutional effectiveness and improves service delivery in key governance areas," he said.

On her part, the UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Nwanne Vwede Obahor, highlighted the role of border posts as integrated operational hubs and critical gateways that can unlock Uganda's potential for growth, prosperity, and sustainable development. "This solarization intervention offers not only immediate operational advantages but also significant long-term developmental contributions that align with Uganda's vision for inclusive and sustainable growth, as outlined in key development frameworks," she added.

Access to energy is not just a development priority - it is a matter of security, resilience, and dignity, and a critical enabler for sustainable development. This intervention demonstrates how sustainability and public service delivery can go hand in hand, even in hard-to-reach locations.

Through such assistance and partnerships, UNDP is "walking the talk," showcasing a resource-efficient, accountable, and climate-resilient model for office and service delivery. This solarization of border posts builds on UNDP's track record in supporting similar initiatives, including the solarization of health centres, markets, and shelters - particularly those responding to gender-based violence.

Call to Action

We must harness the full potential of the newly installed solar systems. With a photovoltaic (PV) capacity of 16 kWp and battery storage of 40 kWh, the system can reliably support a wide range of critical functions: providing lighting for offices; enabling seamless use of computers, printers, routers, and other essential equipment; powering refrigeration for temperature-sensitive items such as vaccines; supporting border control systems (e.g., passport and ID verification); operating surveillance and security systems; and facilitating water pumping, among others.

Importantly, this infrastructure has been designed with climate-smart financing readiness in mind. It is now essential to take the next step by facilitating enrolment into relevant green financing schemes. These can support the long-term sustainability and scalability of solar energy solutions across the respective border posts - and ideally, serve as models for future infrastructure investments.

There is opportunity for scaling as well, adaptable, resilient energy systems that not only withstand shocks - whether environmental, geopolitical, or technological - but also contribute to broader systems resilience. By leveraging the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI), emerging technologies, and innovative financing, we can build energy ecosystems that are not only sustainable and future-ready but also foundational to a more peaceful and secure world.



UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Nwanne Vwede Obahor (centre) with officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs walking towards Cyanika Border Post, Kisoro District. © UNDP Uganda

Voices from the field

"We are so happy, to have this solar system installed here, it has improved our lives, improved the lives of stakeholders around the border, improved the relationship with the border community and between Uganda and Rwanda, " said Rosette Barigye, Officer-in-Charge of Immigration at Cyanika Border.



"I thank UNDP for this gift of the solar installation. There is business continuity without any interruption, the security in the areas we operate, and surroundings are also safe. Previously there has been a high risk of letting in unwanted persons through the border once they do not go through the system, but with this solar system in place, I can assure all Ugandans that only individuals with required documentation will be let in the country. With or without grid power," said Gilbert Kabuzire, Principal Immigration Officer.

"As a border tour guide, this solar system is going to make my work easier and safer, I will comfortably support tourists, day and night, on both sides of the border without any challenge," said Anita Muharo, a border tour guide. 🌍



SHAPING TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR THE FUTURE

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



The World Youth Skills Day and International Day of Education Post-Event and High-Level Policy Dialogue was attended by key stakeholders from government, diplomatic missions, and civil society organization © MoES

A two-day High-Level Policy Dialogue on Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) was held in Kampala 15-16 July 2025, bringing together key stakeholders to discuss strategies for promoting an employer-led TVET system that effectively meets the needs of the labour market.

Organized by the Ministry of Education and Sports with support from UNESCO and other partners, the dialogue aimed to harness TVET's potential for socio-economic transformation, aligning with the global theme of 'Artificial Intelligence and Education, preserving Human Agency in a world of Automation' and Uganda's national focus on employer-led TVET systems.

The event built on the national celebrations of the International Day of Education held on 29 April 2025, officiated by His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Janet Kataha Museveni.

The State Minister for Higher Education, Hon. John Chrysostom Musingo, delivered remarks on behalf of the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, who emphasized the importance of empathy in education amidst rapid technological changes, particularly with the increasing influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI). "We are living in the times of rapid technological changes that challenge how we uphold human dignity, but let us not forget empathy, something no machine can replicate," Musingo underscored.

He challenged the education sector to think boldly, honestly, and act decisively and deliver an education system that does not only offers training but also problem solvers that can think critically, adapt creatively, contribute meaningfully and can thrive in the real world of automation. Musingo urged the stakeholders to prioritize inclusivity, cautioning against systems that marginalize certain learners and aggravate existing disparities.

Mr. Charles Draecabo, UNESCO Antenna Office Coordinator, while reading the statement of UNESCO Director-General on the International Day of Education, highlighted UNESCO's work on establishing guidelines for AI in Education and Research, noting that, UNESCO has published guidance on Generative AI, recommending a minimum age limit of 13 years for AI use in classrooms, and emphasizing the need for clear principles of fairness and ethics in AI deployment.

The High-Level Policy Dialogue integrated a range of sessions and activities, including a keynote speech by Ms. Allen Kagina, Chairperson TVET Council, on the role of TVET in socioeconomic transformation.



A wide range of stakeholders attended the event, comprising policymakers, academia, civil society organizations, students, tutors, and diplomatic corps representatives. © MoES

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“The high policy dialogue is not simply a review of progress but a reaffirmation of Uganda's commitment by placing TVET at the centre of social and economic transformation, said Ms. Kagina.

There were also panel discussions on attracting youth to TVET, integrating entrepreneurship into TVET programmes, and strengthening public-private partnerships, as well as the launch of a TVET awareness campaign and presentations on integrating artificial intelligence in TVET delivery and building inclusive TVET ecosystems.

The dialogue also featured an inter-ministerial roundtable, a policy paper presentation, and a TVET student beneficiaries panel discussion, culminating in a communique. These sessions brought together stakeholders from government, development partners, the private sector, and civil society to share experiences, identify strategies, and endorse policy recommendations for promoting an employer-led TVET system that is effective and meets the needs of the labour market.



TVET students perform a skit during one of the sessions of the high policy dialogue. © UNESCO/Vincent Ogal

Key Policy Recommendations

The dialogue featured key recommendations to boost TVET's impact, including embedding entrepreneurship-based competences into curricula, establishing business incubation hubs, and partnering with SMEs to train TVET trainers, ultimately enhancing TVET's relevance, effectiveness, and responsiveness to labour market needs. 🌍



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For more information, please contact:
MICHAEL WANGUSA | michael.wangusa@un.org
MONICAH ATURINDA | monicah.aturinda@undp.org
 UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO)
uganda.un.org [f](https://www.facebook.com/UNUganda) [UNinUganda](https://www.instagram.com/UNinUganda)