Introductions

Uganda currently has the second youngest population in the world with over 70% below 30 years, second only to Niger’s 83%. The youth population in Uganda comprises of both the educated/skilled and the unskilled living in the rural and urban areas. In some regions like Karamoja and Northern Uganda, youth have been affected by the conflict that has plagued the region for the last 23 years. Such experiences and challenges arising from the breakdown of the social and economic infrastructure, have had a strong bearing on their ability to access social and economic capital to acquire skills, and create their own opportunities.

Youth are either in school, seeking jobs, employed or unemployed with the high unemployment rate leading to social unrest, instability and increased crime rates.

Government has put in place some legal and policy measures to address the unemployment challenge, such as: the National Youths Policy, the National Employment Policy for Uganda, the Skilling Uganda Strategic Plan 2012-2022 as well as the National Youth Council – all of which provide a framework for youth engagement and employment. The Government of Uganda (GoU) Vision 2040 also focuses strongly on skills and employment. These mechanisms have however, not been fully utilized to engage youth in the development agenda of Uganda, thus limiting their ability to realize their full potential.

Youth Engagement and Employment (YEE) is one of three Delivering as One convergence areas for the United Nations in Uganda, focusing on involving young people in decision making and empowering them to be the solution to the development needs of the country.

The other two convergence areas are Maternal and Newborn Health (MNH) and the Gender, Women Empowerment and Gender-based Violence.

Together with YEE, the three convergence areas have been adopted as the critical game changers – interventions where the UN system agencies would work innovatively and collectively to make a significant difference – in successfully implementing the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2010-2014 by the end of 2015.

Led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the YEE membership comprises of: Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO); International Labour Organisation (co-chair); International Organisation for Migration (IOM); Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF); United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat); United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS); United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); United Nations Programmes System (UN-OPS); United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations World Food Programme (WFP); and World Health Organisation (WHO).

These agencies constitute the YEE convergence group, which provides a forum for co-ordination of youth-targeted interventions to accelerate the implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Action Plan and Delivering as One under the Sustainable Livelihoods.

According to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, about 40,000 youth are released annually into the job market to compete for about 9,000 jobs.

Key achievements

1. Support to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, to finalize the National Plan for Youth Employment. Once complete, this Action Plan will contribute to the implementation of the Uganda National Employment Policy by specifically targeting the attention of government and its development partners at all levels, to strategies and interventions that will create opportunities and capacities for addressing employment challenges facing the youth. It will also provide a road map and guide stakeholders in creating and enhancing the quality and availability of gainful employment for Ugandan youth.

2. Launch of a skills development and access to finance project, co-funded by the European Union to provide young men and women, involved in emerging and established enterprises in the urban towns of Kampala, Jinja, Mbale, Soroti, Gulu, Kigoma, Lira, Nebbi, Zombo and Arua.

3. Under the UN Joint Programme on Population, training has been provided to selected partners to support government’s efforts in establishing Labour Market Data.

4. Through support to Government of Uganda, a “Youth Entrepreneurship Development Manual” has been developed and is being used across economic information and services for youth in Northern Uganda, including Karamoja; development of a harmonized package of youth friendly services to be delivered at youth centers; development of guidelines for all UN Uganda livelihoods interventions; development of a youth database of supported youth groups to take stock of and identify value support areas; support to government to validate the draft National Action Plan on Youth Employment to ensure its design includes a Northern Uganda Perspective; Advocate for youth employment (with a special focus on Northern Uganda) to the NDP II; and support review of national and sector policies to ensure coherence with youth needs.

Delivering as one United Nations

It also ensures coherence in different interventions on youth engagement and youth employment to avoid duplication and promote synergies.

The group has embarked on implementing the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth (YOUTH-SWAP), which provides an opportunity to harness the strengths of the UN region in the area of youth development.

As with all UN programmes in Uganda, the Greater Northern Uganda, including Karamoja region, is a special focus for YEE interventions.

The current Programme of Action for the YEE includes: Development of a standardized package for socio-economic information and services for youth in Northern Uganda, including Karamoja; development of a harmonized package of youth friendly services to be delivered at youth centers; development of guidelines for all UN Uganda livelihoods interventions; development of a youth database of supported youth groups to take stock of and identify value support areas; support to government to validate the draft National Action Plan on Youth Employment to ensure its design includes a Northern Uganda Perspective; Advocate for youth employment (with a special focus on Northern Uganda) to the NDP II; and support review of national and sector policies to ensure coherence with youth needs.
the country by Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and private training providers to impart entrepreneurial skills to young people, as they engage in varied on-farm and off-farm business ventures. Developed in 2013, the Youth Entrepreneurship Development Manual has been used by government to train over 6,325 female and male youth so far, with a follow up impact survey indicating that 50% of the youth trained are engaged in gainful business activities.

5. Through support to the National Planning Authority, an issues paper was prepared to inform the formulation of the second National Development Plan (NDP II) to ensure that youth issues are well taken care of in government’s planning.

6. In 2013, the UN was actively involved in supporting national consultations on the Post 2015 Development Agenda, and continues to actively engage in the sector working groups and other platforms related to the NDP II development process to ensure that the themes that emerged from the Post 2015 national, regional and international consultations, including those that are related to youth, are captured within the NDP II.

7. In providing technical advice and policy engagement, UN Uganda employs innovations such as U-reported and the Pulse Lab Kampala (PLK). U-report is a mobile phone short message service (SMS) based surveying tool used to quickly capture the views of thousands of people, while PLK is a data innovation lab under the umbrella of the UN Global Pulse Initiative. These two innovations have been helpful in analyzing data and trends, and enabling youth to voice their concerns and needs to inform the UN’s policy advocacy.

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Advocacy Focus
- Provision of vocational skills training, internship and apprenticeship for youth
- Tailoring education to meet the needs of the job market
- Affordable credit and capital for youth innovation and entrepreneurship
- Youth access to information and resources about the job market
- Accessible sexual reproductive health information for young people to make informed choices.