

Is our young population driving Uganda's socio-economic transformation?

Kampala, December 17 2018





Why intergenerational dialogues?

UNFPA Uganda, in partnership with the Government of Uganda and partners is implementing the “Live Your Dream” Campaign. Now in its third year, the campaign is meant to inspire action towards a better life for young people and women and promote the wellbeing of all in Uganda.

The campaign also aims to contribute to engagement around young people’s reproductive health and address the key challenges that may impede them from achieving their potential by influencing policy change. The campaign is based on four pillars;

- **LIVE YOUR DREAM by letting girls be girls:** focuses on addressing the issues that abruptly end the childhood of girls including Gender-based violence (GBV), lack of access to family planning and teenage pregnancies.
- **LIVE YOUR DREAM by choosing books before babies:** Keeping girls in school by addressing barriers to education and promoting access to appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights to prevent teenage pregnancies and HIV.
- **LIVE YOUR DREAM - With You (th):** reflects on the need to invest in young people in order to unleash their full potential, empowering for innovation and social change. With You (th) also reaches out to young people work in humanitarian settings where host communities and refugee populations work together to build resilience.
- **LIVE YOUR DREAM by bringing generations together** (Generation for Generation - G4G) which involves sharing the wisdom of the elderly with the energies of the youth, tapping into the insights of academia with the diversity of views of decision-makers in order to improve policies that affect Uganda’s future.

As a way to respond to Pillar 4 of the campaign, UNFPA in partnership with NTV Uganda are partnering to hold a series of Generation for Generation (G4G) dialogues. In Uganda, while young people have their own structures to facilitate their engagement in policy discussions, such discussions have been not been witnessed at a meaningful level as majority of the decision-making spaces are held by the older generation. There are also limited platforms to facilitate the generations of the young, middle age and the elderly to convene and dialogue together on key issues affecting Uganda’s youthful population. G4G dialogues become very critical for these discussions to take place. Hence, the overall objective of the dialogues is to create an inclusive platform for both young and older generations from different walks of life and expertise to debate about policy issues with a bid to foster social change.

In order to make social dialogue successful, we need to tap into all generations. That is why we are here today. And UNFPA is uniquely positioned to bring evidence. What better evidence is there than to hear concerns from those who live it every day?

Alain Sibenaler,
Representative UNFPA



Setting the scene

On December 17 2018 the first G4G dialogue was held under the theme: “Is our young population driving Uganda’s socio-economic transformation?” In attendance at the dialogue were young people, including those living with disabilities; representatives from government, the diplomatic corps, UN agencies, embassies and missions and from civil society.

With Uganda trying to reach middle-income country status by 2040 and taking into consideration the demographic bulge of young people and an increased dependency ratio, through these dialogues, UNFPA Uganda focuses on building a body of evidence to support the government of Uganda develop evidence-based policies to enhance the potential of young people in all spheres of decision-making. The dialogue therefore provided an open platform to discuss the various development challenges facing the country, exchange ideas on possible solutions and guide future policy direction to enhance social change.

Today, more than three out of ten people in Uganda are young people aged 10-24 (UBOS, 2016) making Uganda one of the youngest countries in the world. To achieve economic and social growth, young people should be involved in meaningful participation in issues that concern their future. We can deliver with, and for young people, only if we put them at the center of what we do. For this to happen, critical investments and policies should be made to protect their rights, improve their health and provide skills and knowledge to build their capabilities and agency.

UNFPA Representative Mr. Alain Sibenaler and NTV managing Director Mr. Johnson Omolo got the dialogue off to a start by welcoming participants and setting the context of the dialogue by re-echoing the importance of bringing voices of different generations together to discuss the role of young people in Uganda’s socio-economic transformation. This was followed by remarks from the State Minister for Youth, Hon. Florence Nakiwala Kiyingi, who pledged to address the policy issues arising from the discussions.

Dr. Joseph Muvawala, the Executive Director of the National Planning Authority set the pace for the discussions by delivering a Keynote address, which was followed by a panel discussion from a multigenerational panel consisting of representatives from three generations - young people, middle aged and the elderly as follows:

1. Dr Jotham Musinguzi, Director General, National Population Council (Elder)
2. Prof. Maggie Kigozi, Business Consultant (Elder)
3. Mr. Gideon Badagawa, Executive Director, Private Sector Foundation Uganda (middle aged)
4. Ms. Stella Abola, Manager, Client Coverage Stanbic Bank (middle aged)
5. Ms. Mary Arach Zilla, Chief Technology Officer, Akorion Technologies (young person)
6. Mr. Ian Lumonya, Student, Uganda Christian University (young person)

Moderators: Mr. Patrick Kamara and Ms. Malaa Kivila Odera from NTV Uganda.

The event was broadcast live on NTV and on social media via livestream to an audience of over one million people.

Inter-generation policy points





ISSUE 1

Unpacking the link between education, skills development and employment

A key ingredient for Uganda's socio-economic transformation is job creation. However, Uganda still experiences high levels of youth unemployment with the youth constituting 65 per cent of those unemployed. At least nine in every 10 Ugandans who have completed any form of education are unemployed.

Up to 700,000 people join the job market every year regardless of qualification but only 90,000 get something to do. This translates to 87 per cent of people ready to work but cannot find a job (NPA, 2017).

Factors that hinder young people from accessing quality education to prepare them for job markets

The education sector still faces many challenges that must be addressed in order for education to lead to transformational change:

- Low national budgetary allocation to education sector - The education budget as a percentage of the total national budget has been reducing over the years from 17.5 in 2016/2017 to 10.87 in 2017/2018. In nominal terms, the education sector budget has increased over the years. However, government investment in the sector has not increased commensurate to the growing population of young people entering the education system.
- Low efficiency in primary education - this is expressed by high teacher absenteeism, high pupil absenteeism, dropout and repetition, out-of-school children, inadequate utilization of teachers and high teacher attrition rates;
- Low quality of primary education - this is manifested by low learning outcomes (particularly numeracy and literacy), low efficiency, inadequate school management supervision
- Congestion in classrooms and lack of educational amenities - this is as a result of the high population growth putting pressure on the existing resources and facilities.
- Mismatch between school curriculum and the current job skill requirements. Uganda's youthful population is majorly unskilled or semi- skilled and generally not financially empowered.





Present policy options:

- The National Employment Policy (2011);
- The National Youth Policy and Action Plan (2016) - Uganda's Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) and the consequent Youth Livelihood Fund (YLF)
- National Action Plan (NAP) for Youth Employment;
- The Skilling Uganda Strategic Plan (2012-2022) also known as Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (BTJET) Strategic Plan
- Government of Uganda Vision 2040
- The National Youth Council

Policy pointers from the panelists

The education system is not preparing young people enough. They have knowledge but less skill. Many are knowledgeable but unemployable. Critical/soft skills are lacking (communication, problem solving etc):

- Youth unemployment in Uganda stands at 6.5%, attributed to the mismatch between skills obtained through the education system and labour market demands (State of Uganda Population Report 2018). How are we going to increase the number of young people in the work force, reduce dependency and achieve the demographic dividend?
- The education system is the core for solving unemployment issues. How can we make secondary and primary school drop-outs more employable, and how can we change mindsets of employers to focus more on soft skills and not just academic qualifications?
- To enhance job creation, how do we incorporate non-traditional courses (such as fashion and design, arts, music dance and drama) in the curriculum to enable more young people make a contribution to meaningful transformation for Uganda?
- High mortality rates for start-ups. Eighty percent of our start-ups collapse yet the majority of the people starting up are youth. What measures can policy makers take to ensure that young innovators and entrepreneurs are not taxed the same way as multinational corporations?
- Is the school curriculum vocationalised well enough to provide young people with skills training in carpentry, gardening, brick laying etc?
- Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTJET) can drive socio-economic transformation. However, many youth who acquire technical skills do not have an entrepreneur mindset/soft skills. How can we ensure that the education curriculums ensures integration of technical skills with soft skills?

“Uganda cannot achieve the Demographic Dividend and its vision unless we consciously invest in the youth. If we don't, this big number will remain dependent and not an asset. We must invest in youth in health, education and finance however costly it is.” -

Dr Joseph Muvawala, Executive Director National Planning Authority.

Policy recommendations from the dialogue:

Uganda is a growing economy but is currently not creating enough jobs. To fulfil young people's potential, there is need to provide a conducive political and economic environment by designing policies that foster job creation to enable young people to create their own jobs.

- Young people should be supported to access technologies that give them a competitive edge with the fast globalizing world.
- Providing adequate safety nets by investing in the quality in education (and health) including behavioral, attitudinal and mindset change of both employers and graduates.
- Need to transform the curriculum at various levels of the education system to make people more employable on the job market. Young people in school should be equipped with the right skills and competencies to give them a competitive edge at global level. The education sector should provide a qualification framework for harnessing technical skills of young people, through provision of international certifications that will make them more competitive.
- Need to encourage vocational training, business skills, which all speak to economic empowerment. In addition, there is need to focus on non-traditional careers such as the creative arts in to create more job opportunities.



- Dialogues between employers and tertiary institutions should be considered as a way to ensure students graduate with the right mix of both technical, soft skills including problem- solving skills.
- Skilling and entrepreneurship training should not be left to tertiary institutions alone but mainstreamed in all lower levels of the education system. Meaningful transformation is not only about structures but sufficient grassroots training. Young people should be able to access and learn skills that will help them create jobs rather than looking for employment. Therefore transformative education that provides autonomous thinking should be promoted.
- Promote use of local language for comprehension for primary schools to improve quality of education.
- Uganda has done very well with access (in health and education). There is need to do better with quality.

“Don’t be a problem identifier; be a problem solver.”-
Dr Stella Kivula, participant.



ISSUE 2



Enabling environment: Promoting young people as partners and leaders in the implementation of the country's development agenda

Giving youth a place in decision-making also builds a broader base of citizen involvement and creates stronger, more inclusive communities. Youth participation is necessary in the development of active citizenship because it balances young people's social rights with their responsibilities.

Youth participation challenges negative stereotypes of young people and helps break down barriers between adults and young people. It is a foundation for building youth leadership in a country. Young people who are supported to participate in decision-making are more likely to have increased confidence and self-belief and have greater involvement and responsibility in the future.

Therefore, youth actors must invest in availing opportunities for youth to develop skills including leadership skills. Investing in youth leadership not only ensures that the future generation is equipped with competencies necessary for strong leadership, but enhances young people's understanding of how to be accountable and inspiring leaders.



“So the questions are; do we have the policies in education, in health, job creation, security and governance to make sure that we are creating enough jobs for these people to have incomes, to earn money, save and become the engine of growth of our country? That is the road that we envisage.”

**–Dr Jotham Tumwesigye,
Director General, National
Population Council**

Present policy options that provide framework for youth engagement and employment:

- The National Employment Policy (2011);
- The National Youth Policy and Action Plan (2016) - Uganda's Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) and the consequent Youth Livelihood Fund (YLF)
- National Action Plan (NAP) for Youth Employment;
- The Skilling Uganda Strategic Plan (2012-2022) also known as Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) Strategic Plan
- Government of Uganda Vision 2040
- The National Youth Council

Policy discussion points:

- Are young people driving change in this country? Are they driving socio-economic transformation? Is our youthful population becoming useful?
- How can we tap into young people's potential, to enable them spearhead social transformation in their communities and the country so as to achieve the demographic dividend?
- Do we have the policies in education, in health, job creation, security and governance to make sure that we are creating enough jobs for these people to have incomes, to be able to save money with reduced dependencies so as to become the engine of growth of the country?
- Among the young people remains is a get-rich –quick mentality. How do we get young people to appreciate the need for patience and the need to work hard?

Policy recommendations from the dialogue:

- Addressing socio-cultural barriers that hinder the youth from achieving their dreams like teenage pregnancies and child marriages. We must deal with all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls.
- Young people should learn how to invest in themselves by making the right health choices so as to stay productive.
- There is need to think critically about investing in family planning. Young people should have the children they can afford so as to reduce the dependency burden and increase savings for planning and investments.
- Increase access to information on sexual and reproductive health and prevention of Gender Based Violence and services for young people so they can make informed decisions about their health and live productive lives.
- Young people should be more involved in policy dialogue to ensure that policies work for them. Young people should also be at the forefront on issues of governance so that they can have an input on how issues like corruption affect their future.
- There is need to put in place incentives such as subsidies for start-ups; increase access to interest-free loans or low- interest loans for young entrepreneurs and innovators to encourage innovation.
- Entrepreneurship skills should be included in the school curriculum

CAREER TIP:



Three things that employers in the private sector look for in prospective employees:

- Academic qualifications/experience (20 percent) – degrees and diplomas, important for applications and interview sessions.
- Hard skills/practical skills (30 percent) – Theory is important, but practical training is even more important.
- Soft skills (50 percent): Reading attitude, behavior, communication skills, integrity, accountability etc.



ISSUE 3

Uganda's untapped potential to unleash the contributions of its young population

There is a lot of untapped potential in the youth in Uganda. One of the ways to lay out national investment both in private sector and government is to focus on the potential of these young people.

This youthful population is also an opportunity that must be harnessed and invested if we are to achieve the Demographic Dividend. Given their innovativeness and creative power, there is no better change agent than the young people who are recognized as a constant in an economic theory of change.

Policy recommendations from the dialogue:

Uganda's untapped potential among Uganda's young population can be activated by:

- Embracing and supporting the creativity of young people by creating spaces to promote entrepreneurship and enhance innovation for social change by providing opportunities for knowledge creation.
- Creating space for more intergenerational dialogues that bring together the energy, creative ideas and vitality of young people at the same table with the experience, wisdom and guidance of elders and other distinguished members of society as a way of formulating policies that work for young people.
- Focusing on targeted skilling programmes for young people who are already absorbed in the labour force and have not got the opportunity to go through the formal schooling system by upgrading and retooling BTVET institutions for more theoretical and practical knowledge.

- Promote entrepreneurship among young people by availing incentives such as cheap electricity and tax holidays.
- Advocate for an increase in public spending on youth programmes to relieve the burden from the young adults whose window of opportunity to save is limited.
- Support young people to develop and nurture their talents through co-curricular education including creative industry (sport, music, dance, drama and tourism).

“Education is critical for the youth. Continue embracing it. Your first degree is really, just pointing to the fact that you can think, and you can learn more.”

– Dr Maggie Kigozi, Business woman and entrepreneur.



“Given your innovativeness and creative power there is no better change agent than the youth. The youth are a constant in an economic theory of change.”

**- Dr Joseph Muvawala,
Executive Director National
Planning Authority**



OVERALL CONCLUSION

While a lot has been done to invest in the infrastructure required to promote young people's participation in socio-economic development there is need to focus more on the human capital that is young people. There is need to improve the quality of education to focus not only on technical skills but also soft skills that young people need to navigate the world.

In practical terms, this would entail improving the quality and relevance of education curriculae; introducing /strengthening apprenticeships and other forms of work-based training for young people; offering entrepreneurial skills development and mentoring. In addition, there is need to improve access to finance for business start-ups for young people combined with mentoring and business advice and training.

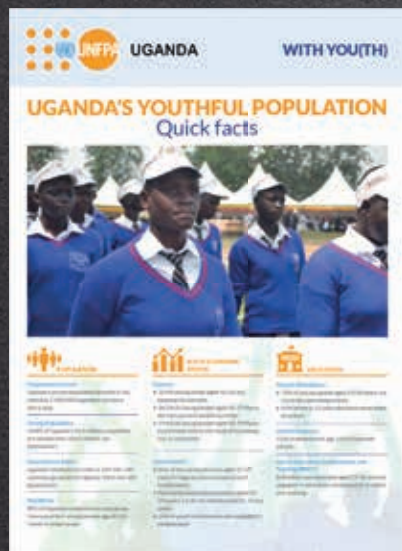
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“I welcome this initiative that brings together the energy, creative ideas and vitality of young people at the same table with the experience, wisdom and guidance of elders and other distinguished members of society.”

**- Hon. Florence Kiyingi,
Minister of State for Youth**

Snapshot of UNFPA publications on youth

For more information about UNFPA work with YOU(TH), visit <https://uganda.unfpa.org/>



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