

UNFPA in the media



Xinhua Fighting centuries' old cultural blade in eastern Uganda (Sep 20, 2015)



New Vision Invest in the youth today (July 17, 2015)



Huffington Post Investing in the transformative power of a mobile generation (Jul 31, 2015)



Daily Monitor An app for youth to get info on sexual health (Aug 12, 2015)



Devex A new paradigm for reproductive health: Using technology to reach young people (Jul 23, 2015)



UN Youth Envoy Joining the judges in a youth version of #SharkTank in KLa. #Hack4Youth featuring 7 youth-led projects aiming to offer innovative solutions for SRH services



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Deby Khrysy Thanx for paying my mid-wifery tuition, if it wasn't for UNFPA I don't know where I wld be right now

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▲ Young people worked with experts and UNFPA staff to develop new mobile health solutions at the #HackForYouth Hackathon. The winning team celebrates with a selfie.

Young people hack their way to better sexual and reproductive health

At first it seemed like the 80 participants at the Hackathon were shy or still jet-lagged, as no questions were asked after the presentations on the first day. Luckily, in the afternoon when they were placed in their hacking groups and given the assignment to write down ideas on post-its, the ice was broken and the room started buzzing with ideas, some crazier than others.

The purpose of the three day-hackathon called #HackForYouth was to bring together young innovators along with software engineers and UNFPA experts in sexual and reproductive health to develop mobile app solutions that improve young people's access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Sponsored by UNFPA's Innovation Fund, the hackathon responds to a growing commitment to leverage technology to empower young people, complimenting UNFPA's ongoing work and empowering young leaders so they can be pivotal agents for the health and wealth of society. "It is the first time ever that UNFPA is organizing a Hackathon and I believe it is the first time a hackathon is being organised on such sensitive issues of sexuality," said UNFPA Global Coordinator, Data for Development

Platform Bruce Campbell.

After two days of relentless designing, coding and occasional joking, the seven groups with participants from over 20 countries presented their prototypes to a panel of five judges - including Ahmad Alhendawi, the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. The projects were graded on ease-of-use, market strategy and potential impact on young people's lives.

One prototype app aimed to improve the reporting of sexual harassment; another was designed to reach rural first-time mothers with maternal health information. Still another aimed to address young people's concerns about maintaining privacy while accessing sexual and reproductive health care.

The winner was a quiz app called TriGivia, which dispels myths and provides accurate information about sexual and reproductive health. By playing the game, users earn points redeemable for free mobile airtime.

"It has to be fun and not too complex. That was my take-home from the three-continues on page 2

continuation from page 1

day experience," said Athibert Atukunda, a young developer from the winning team.

All the teams have been invited to further refine their prototypes, which can be submitted to the UNFPA Innovation Fund. The submissions will be evaluated by UNFPA and MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) for potential funding, testing and piloting.

But their work does not end here. It is now up to them to develop their concept further. As UNFPA Uganda Country Representative Ms Esperance Fundira told the participants and the press: "The role of young people is at the centre,

as actors, not just as recipients. Our role is to support those young people." UNFPA has put funds aside to give the winning team the possibility to shape their application into an actual prototype, ready for piloting.

Mr Ahmad Alhendawi, UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth was impressed by the innovative thinking and team spirit of the participants. He stressed the importance of a healthy generation of young people to drive development and decried the challenge of teenage pregnancies. "That is why this hackathon idea is a smart one: we need to 'hack teenage pregnancy' and get young people on board as part of the solution," Mr Alhendawi said.



Messages on Vision 2040 resonate through schools music, dance and drama festival

The thundering beat of drums and thumping of feet as one traditional dance after another was performed by flexible young dancers. The chatter of young voices as they bantered with the Master of Ceremonies. The atmosphere in the National Theatre on the afternoon of August 16 was electric, the kind one would expect during a performance by a top artist. Except this was not a famous artist but the finals of the 2015 Music Dance and Drama festival (MDD) organized by the Ministry of Education Science Technology and Sports. The performances took the audience on a cultural tour of sorts sampling an array of traditional dances, folk songs from the *Bakisimba* of Buganda to the *Ekizino* from down South in Kigezi to the polished sounds of Western Choral singing and poetry recitals.

With support from UNFPA and the National Planning Authority, Ministry of Education officials conducted countrywide training for music teachers on the theme *Vision 2040: Harnessing Young people's Potential for Uganda's socio-economic transformation*. The teachers then had their work cut out for them; to ensure the students understood the theme and interpreted it through song, dance and other forms of artistic expression. The schools then competed at regional festivals from which a total of 42 finalists were selected to participate in the national finals.

Speaking at the event, UNFPA Country Representative Ms. Esperance Fundira could not hide her excitement. "I'm glad

that I was convinced to invest in the MDD festival. I'm so impressed by the way young people have understood and interpreted the theme of the festival," she said.

Representing the Prime Minister as chief guest, Dr. Yusuf Nsubuga, the Director Basic and Secondary Education noted that the issue of teenage pregnancy and resultant school drop outs was indeed a challenge to Uganda's attainment of Vision 2040. He called for more efforts to end teenage pregnancy and to support girls to stay in school.

With a total of 878 points against 877 from closest competitor Lubiri Secondary, Buddo Secondary School in Wakiso district lifted the overall trophy. The celebrations went on into the night as excited students and their teachers basked in the fruits of their hard work.

But beyond the celebrations was the consensus that indeed the theme was a very pertinent one for Uganda. Ms. Fundira pledged that UNFPA would continue to work with Ministry of Education to amplify messages on investing in young people as a means to attain the ideals of Vision 2040.

And important messages were carried away from the event. "By participating in the festivals I have learnt about the importance of educating young people, especially girls," said Rashid Ngobi from Kamuli Grade School.

President of the UN General Assembly and President of Uganda attend World Population Day

The tempo at Sembabule District Headquarters grounds, South West of Uganda, changed. The crowd of over 10,000 people went into a frenzy as the drummer's beat went up to speed, playing to its loudest, competing with the ululations of the crowd in the background. It was World Population Day commemorations and the guest of honour, His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the President of Uganda had just arrived.

It was one of those rare occasions when two Presidents attended an event, several kilometers outside the country's capital. This World Population Day was attended by the President of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Sam K. Kutesa, who together with several Cabinet Ministers, the UNFPA Country Representative, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Uganda, District Local Leaders and other high level officials welcomed President Museveni to the event. President Museveni inspected a guard of honor, visited exhibition stalls set up by civil society and government officials, and planted a tree on arrival.

The theme for this year, *Vulnerable Populations in Emergencies*, could not have been more timely. Uganda hosts almost a quarter of East Africa's refugees, with a total of 433,595 and with the insurgency in Burundi and South Sudan escalating, the numbers are growing.

In her remarks, the UNFPA Country Representative, Ms.

Esperance Fundira hailed Uganda for having one of the most progressive policies for refugees in the Region that protects and advances the dignity and the rights of refugees. "The policy gives a refugee an opportunity to move freely without curtails to interact with, and also enjoy the same kind of services as the Ugandan population, including health, education, and even access land," she said.

President Museveni explained why Uganda is very welcoming to refugees. "We handle refugees well because besides physical borders, they are our people and will benefit the country in the long run. We have to make sure that we create unity, because when peace finally comes, they will benefit us economically by creating a regional market," President Museveni said.

Ms. Fundira called for a redoubled effort to address the needs of the more vulnerable populations during humanitarian response, especially women and adolescent girls, who face much greater risk of abuse, sexual exploitation, teenage pregnancy, violence and forced marriage during conflicts and natural disasters.

"Ensuring the health and safety of women, girls and adolescents is not only a moral obligation; it is also a strategic investment in disaster risk reduction. Placing their protection at the centre of humanitarian response makes communities more resilient and helps with recovery," Ms. Fundira said.



Picture 1: The Presidential tent at World Population Day, from L to R: Mrs. Kutesa, The President of the UN General Assembly Hon. Sam Kutesa, President of Uganda H.E. Yoweri Museveni, State Minister of Finance for Planning Hon. David Bahati, UNFPA Representative Ms. Esperance Fundira, Sembabule Woman MP Hon. Hanifah Kawooya.

Picture 2: The event was attended by a large crowd of over 10,000 people.

Picture 3: The President of the UN General Assembly Hon. Sam Kutesa shakes the hands of the winning football team. A football match was one of the pre-World Population Day activities.

Picture 4: The President of Uganda H.E. Yoweri Museveni delivering his speech during World Population Day.



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Running for a cause: Church of Uganda Archbishop leads marathon to end FGM

The dark fertile soils, the dark green vegetation and the mountainous terrain are a breathtaking sight for anyone visiting Kapchorwa district in north-eastern Uganda. Yet, often when one mentions Kapchorwa and the neighboring districts of Kween and Bukwo, it not about the beauty of this area, locally known as the Sebei Region, but rather it is about the harmful secret it hides - Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is performed on Sebei girls and women as a traditional custom.

FGM or the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia is done to girls as young as 8 years and also to women of the Sabinu tribe, as well as the neighbouring Pokot and Tepeth tribes. The cultural belief is that whoever does not undergo this rite of passage to womanhood stays a girl for eternity.

But things are starting to change. The recent marathon organized by Church of Uganda Sebei diocese, with support from UNFPA demonstrated that the movement to end FGM in this region is getting bigger and gaining momentum. The marathon to accelerate FGM abandonment attracted over 2,000 spectators and 200 participants including internationally renowned professional runners. Moses Kipsiro, Uganda's long-distance runner and Commonwealth Gold Medalist also participated in the event.

The marathon was flagged-off by the Archbishop of the Church of Uganda, His Grace Stanley Ntagali accompanied by the Bishop of Sebei diocese, Rt. Rev. Paul Masaba Kiptoi, UNFPA Country Representative Ms. Esperance Fundira, the Executive Director of Reproductive Health Uganda, Mr. Jackson Checkweko and district officials from Kween, Bukwo and Kapchorwa.

"Have you ever witnessed an event where there are two bishops running?" Archbishop Ntagali asked the crowd that joined the runners at the end point of the marathon. "The Creator of the heavens and the earth, our God made every one of us with every part wonderful. Male and female were both created in his image and he marveled at His work for which he said, 'It is good'. We do not need to mutilate any part of our bodies for any reason because this profits nothing, pains us and does not please God," the Archbishop said.

The heavy cheer from the crowd following the Archbishop's words was a clear sign that the church's active engagement



▲ From L to R: Executive Director RHU Mr. Jackson Checkweko, Country Representative UNFPA Ms. Esperance Fundira and Church of Uganda Archbishop The Most Rev. Stanley Ntagali during the marathon.

in the campaign to end FGM is a game-changer in the campaign to end FGM. For over 15 years, several groups including community based organisations, youth groups, women groups, Kraal leaders, and other local partners, have been mobilizing communities to end FGM in the region. Their work has generated a lot of community response with many cutters abandoning the practice.

The church's active engagement adds a very unique aspect to the campaign. As a religious institution, Church of Uganda is more accepted, especially in the remote villages where the custom of FGM is deep rooted. The spiritual messages from religious leaders are able to demystify the spiritual aspects of FGM.

"I add my voice to the scientists who have proved that this practice is dangerous to our daughters, wives and Sebei mothers. Culture is dynamic and not static. If a culture is proved to be harmful to humans, like FGM, we cannot simply continue practicing it because it is our culture," the Archbishop said.

He was also alluding to an earlier statement by Ms. Esperance Fundira, UNFPA's Country Representative that, "it is possible to give up FGM without giving up the meaningful, positive aspects of the Sabinu culture."

Ms. Fundira pledged continued support by UNFPA in the fight to end female genital mutilation, "we shall continue the fight, until FGM only exists in history books." The crowd responded with the loudest applause in agreement.