OVERVIEW

- On the 5th of June 2017, United Nations Resident Coordinator and United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative Ms. Rosa Malango called on Ugandans to combine existing local initiatives with new technologies and innovation to ensure that human activity does not destroy the environment as we pursue economic growth. She made the call during the National Commemoration of World Environment Day held in Ibanda District in Western Uganda.

- At the invitation of the President of the Republic of Uganda H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, Mr. Michel Sidibé Executive Director of UNAIDS attended the launch of the Presidential Fast Track Initiative on ending AIDS in Uganda. This marked the beginning of an awareness campaign to engage everyone in Uganda in the fight for a generation free of AIDS.

- As raising awareness about HIV continues to be a priority worldwide, UN Cares Uganda organized an interactive seminar on HIV/AIDS for UN staff children. This year’s focus was on Content Skills-Based Health Education for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Human Rights. The new UNFPA Country Representative Mr. Alain Sibenaler, seminar and actively engaged with the children and youth on 9th June 2017. This session was facilitated by Naguru Teenage Center.

- According to UNHCR, the total number of refugees and asylum seekers from South Sudan in Uganda was 931,398 and the number of those who arrived after 7th July 2016 was 613, 142 as of 21st May 2017.

- UNICEF adopts Grandmother Approach to end Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) and Early Child Marriage in Eastern Uganda. The grandmothers approach is implemented by REACH, a partner of UNICEF on FGM/C and early child marriage and reinforces the role of communities.

- Muslim religious leaders and scholars from Eastern and Southern Africa gathered in Kampala and agreed on a framework to enable them work together to fight against all forms of extremist activities in the name of Islam. The declaration follows a similar one signed by religious leaders in West. The framework was agreed upon during a two day summit organised by International Interfaith Peace Corps (IIPP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)’s Regional Service Centre for Africa.
COMMUNITY SERVICE IS KEY FOR ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION IN UGANDA - SAYS UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR

By Henry Mukasa, UN Development Programme (UNDP)

The United Nations Resident Coordinator and United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative Ms. Rosa Malango has called on Ugandans to combine existing local initiatives with new technologies and innovation to ensure that human activity does not destroy the environment as we reach for economic growth.

Speaking at national celebrations to mark the UN World Environment Day on 5th June, held in Ibanda District in Western Uganda, Ms Malango who is also the UN Resident Coordinator said smart and inexpensive ways like tree planting days at village or district level can multiply into a massive reforestation.

“I understand there was a time in Uganda when the local chief would proclaim days for ‘bulungi bwansi’ (community service),” Ms Malango observed. “Today, we can use laws and technology to reinforce this spirit of community service without needing significant financial resources,” she added. She called on school principals, religious and traditional leaders as well as sports celebrities to lead these initiatives as environment and community champions.
With the local theme for the day calling on communities to, “connect to nature, appreciate biodiversity,” Ms. Malango said children and the youth must be taught to respect nature, protect the environment and to learn about national heritage by visiting National Parks.

“On behalf of the UN system in Uganda I pledge our continued support to the Government and people of Uganda to pursue green growth, provide humanitarian assistance and leave no one behind. We will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people and government of this nation,” Ms Malango said.

Ms. Malango saluted Uganda for its transformative refugee policy which provides a safe and dignified environment for those fleeing for their lives and live in settlements set up in; Isingiro, Kamwenge, Adjumani, Arua and Yumbe districts. “We recognize that the pressure exerted by refugees on the environment as they settle down is significant and in response we are working with the Government to mobilize support. This is why President Yoweri Museveni and the UN Secretary General, António Guterres will co-host the Uganda Solidarity Summit on refugees in Kampala on 22-23 June,” she disclosed. She invited business leaders and development partners to donate and sustain the humanitarian response and the development programmes aimed at creating jobs for Ugandans and refugees during the summit.

President Yoweri Museveni, who was chief guest, said protecting the environment was not a hobby but a matter of survival for humans. “Protecting the environment isn’t an academic exercise, it is not something you do as a hobby. It is a matter of life and death for us,” President Museveni said.

The President explained that wetlands were crucial because their water could be used for agriculture as well as irrigation. He said they are also important for rain formation and filtering water before it flows into the bigger water bodies. “Wetlands are a habitat for creatures which are useful to us. Tourists come to see them,” the President said.

He also said called on communities to stop cutting down forests which are important sources of medicine such as antibiotic penicillin that is made from mold and quinine, used in the treatment of Malaria, obtained from Cinchona bark. “By destroying forests we are destroying these sources of medicines,” Mr Museveni warned. “These are genetic banks. Let them stay there. As science grows, we shall get uses for them.”

Also present at the event was Ms Stephanie Rivoal, the French Ambassador to Uganda, who called on the country to fight against climate change. Observing that the most basic link for all people world over is that they inherited the planet and thus making it their duty to fight for climate justice.

Dr Tom Okurut, the Executive Director, National Environmental Authority (NEMA), agreed with her saying that the destruction of the environment and biodiversity has adverse consequences
including affecting tourism which currently one of Uganda’s biggest foreign exchange earners.

World Environment Day which is celebrated every 5th of June annually is the United Nations principal vehicle for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the environment.

SDG 3 – GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

UNAIDS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ATTENDS THE LAUNCH OF THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL FAST TRACK INITIATIVE GLOBALLY ON ENDING AIDS AS A PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT

By Caroline Magambo, UNAIDS

At the invitation of the President of the Republic of Uganda H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, Executive Director of UNAIDS Mr. Michel Sidibé attended the launch of the Presidential Fast Track Initiative on ending AIDS in Uganda.

The five-point plan which was launched on 6th June in Kampala outlines key subject areas in revitalising HIV prevention and closing the tap of new infections particularly among girls and young women; consolidating progress on elimination of mother to child transmission; accelerating implementation of “test and treat” which is expected to rapidly scale-up coverage of HIV treatment services in the country; ensuring domestic financing sustainability for the HIV response and finally strengthening institutional effectiveness for a multi-sectoral response.

The President noted with concern that the rise in new infections in the country stands at 227 per day. Of these, the adolescent population especially vulnerable girls, account for 50 new infections; that is 2 girls between the ages of 15-24 are infected every hour. He also stated that Uganda has firmly placed itself on course to achieving the 90-90-90 targets as well as ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 through the initiative.

“I call upon the men to go for voluntarily counselling and testing and be put on treatment when found to be HIV positive. Treatment will help supress the virus in your bodies and prolong your lives. With the virus suppressed in your bodies, you will not pass on the infection to your partners” he said.

Mr Sidibé paid tribute to the President and the exceptional initiative he has made to refocus the HIV response in Uganda. The Executive Director noted that the President’s leadership in the early 90’s established Uganda as a frontrunner and the renewed focus would once again distinguish the country in the fight against AIDS. He also applauded the President for being
the first President to negotiate the price of antiretroviral treatment therapy (ART) with the private sector, by 90%.

“Uganda was a model for us. Mr President we would need you to take a lead on this not only in Uganda but the continent and the world” he said. Mr Sidibé also emphasised that ending AIDS is an investment and not a charity.

Present at the launch was also the First Lady of Zambia, Esther Lungu who reaffirmed her commitment to the AIDS response and that of the organisation of African First ladies against AIDS. The President officially declared the initiative launched and pledged his commitment. In attendance were members of cabinet, government agencies, UN representatives, Ambassadors, the Inter-religious Council, Civil Society and the press.

While in the country, the Executive Director also presented the First Lady of Uganda Hon. Janet Museveni with an award to recognise her exceptional contribution to the elimination of mother to child transmission of HIV; he launched the innovative private sector One Dollar
UN STAFF CHILDREN EQUIPPED WITH LIFE-SKILLS ON HIV EDUCATION AND PREVENTION

By Monica Aturindah Kyeyune, UN Resident Coordinator’s Office (RCO)

As raising awareness about HIV continues to be a priority worldwide, UN Cares Uganda organized an interactive seminar on HIV/AIDS for UN staff children. This year’s focus was on Content Skills-Based Health Education for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Human Rights. The seminar that took place on 9 June 2017 at Katikati Restaurant, Lugogo by-pass, Kampala, Uganda was facilitated by Naguru Teenage Center.

While speaking to the children on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Alain Sibenaler, UNFPA Representative asked the children to be agents of change. “We see you as partners in progress and agents of change, we must give it our best and together we shall win the fight against HIV/AIDS”.

“I have learned to value my strength other than focusing on my weakness and this is something that will help me in future to become who I want to be,” said Agatha a participant at the seminar.

“I have learned that its dangerous to have unprotected sex because a person could be infected with HIV and then they pass it on to you,” said Paul another participant.

The message was communicated through age appropriate focused group discussions on HIV Education and Human Rights, Quiz competitions with prizes, inspirational talks by role models giving career and life-skills tips.
Dr. Sabrina Kitaka, a pediatrician and role model for the day encouraged children to always have dreams because they will guide them to a bright future. She shared her ABCD; Ask, Be, Care and Dare strategy to achieving one’s passion. She encouraged children to always ask for what they want.

“It’s you who will make your dream alive by making careful decisions in life. Be it in educations and the friends you make,” said Mr. Gleh Appleton speaking to the UN staff children on behalf of the UN Cares team. The youth seminar that happens every year is aimed to provide the necessary life-skills on HIV education and prevention to the children of the UN employees.
UNICEFadoptsgrandmotherapproachtoendFGM/CandearlychildmarriageineasternUganda

ByCatherineNtabaddeMakumbi,UNChildren’sFund(UNICEF)

It is a hot sunny day in Matingot Village, Kapchorwa District and a group of over 30 grandmothers with their granddaughters and sons are seated under a tree explaining their approach of preventing female genital mutilation/cutting and early child marriage to representatives of DFID-UK and SIDA-Lusaka office.

Joyce Yapchemusto, 57, says they talk to their grandchildren about the dangers of FGM and early child marriage. “We teach them how to live a quality life in the community without undergoing FGM or even getting married when so young,” she explains. Yapchemusto says that through their approach, they have reached out to many other grandmothers within the community but hastens to add that “a lot needs to be done” to wipe out the practices.

Excited to see guests interact with them, Gladys Chemutai, 60, says in the past, it was not easy to receive such high level teams in their communities. Giving credit to current trends and the education the community members have received, the grandmothers now have an
opportunity to interact with such high level visitors. The guests included DFID UK’s Policy Manager Rebekah Diski, Kim Sundstrom from SIDA region office in Lusaka, Seynabou Tall, Technical Gender adviser UNFPA, Nafissatou Diop, Coordinator of the joint programme on FGM/C at UNFPA, Alain Sibenaler, UNFPA Uganda’s Representative, UNFPA’s head of human rights and gender Luis Mora, UNICEF’s Mar Jubero, and Ministry of Gender’s Idah Kigonya among others.

The team was in Kapchorwa and Amudat districts for the Joint Programme Steering Committee field visit as part of the climax of the Annual global consultation meeting on UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on FGM/C. UNFPA and UNICEF are implementing joint programmes on FGM/C and early child marriage.

Chemutai notes that, “We grew up in the hands of our grandmothers who told us stories and prepared us for adolescent stages. But now this role is neglected in the communities. That is why we are trying to do what we should have done long time ago to save tomorrow’s generation from FGM and early child marriage.” The grandmothers approach is implemented by REACH, a partner of UNICEF on FGM/C and early child marriage. Beatrice Chelangat, the Program Coordinator REACH says the grandmothers underwent training to enable them understand their roles and expectations in the campaign to end FGM/C and Child Marriage. This was after UNICEF had trained REACH about the approach in 2011.

The grandmothers’ approach looks at the cross/inter-generation communication with an aim of changing behaviors. In Uganda, REACH adopted the approach from Senegal where it was first introduced in the fight against FGM/C in 2009. A concept to localise it was developed and piloted in 2012 and in 2013, the pilot was undertaken with REACH in Amudat and Nakapiripirit districts. The initiative was then expanded in 2014/2015. According to Marianna Garofalo, UNICEF Child Protection Specialist who was part of the field visit, a group of grandmothers who act as role models are trained and sensitised on the subject matter and thereafter encouraged to pass on the same messages to their grandchildren with the confidence that the grandmothers/elders in the communities are influential and champions.

The idea is that the grandmothers’ sons listen to them and they in away possess a lot of influence on who their sons marry in addition to undertaking interactions with their daughters-in-law. Rebecca Kwagala, Chief of Moroto Zone Office, UNICEF says the grandmothers play a critical role at household and homestead level, adding that through them, a number of girls in the communities have remained uncut or rescued from FGM, mainly a result of the one-one advocacy they spearhead. Through this approach, the grandmothers also promote go back to school and stay in school campaigns, also implemented by UNICEF. She explained that through a wide range of orientations, the initiative is now implemented in three districts of Sebei region–Kapchorwa, Kween, Bukwo with focus on ending child marriage. The grandmothers are oriented on issues of child protection especially the need for them to appreciate raising children as children and not to be married off when young.
The teams also visited Ngaimbirir Primary School, Reproductive Health Uganda clinic in Kapchorwa district, Looro Sub Country in Amudat where two villages denounced FGM, Looro Child Friendly Space also in Amudat and listened to detailed presentation from the district authorities of Kapchorwa and Amudat on the progress, achievements, challenges and new plans of fighting FGM/C in the districts. The Kapchorwa district community development officer Harriet Aseko noted that between 1990-2012, 7,363 girls are reported uncut. She attributes the drop in the prevalence to the enactment of the FGM Act 2010 and aggressive interventions and mechanisms by partners.

Objectives of the mission included, assessing progress in achieving the Joint Programme goal on social norms change, identifying existing best practices, opportunities, draw backs and strength of the programme, meet and interact with the primary beneficiaries of the programme including survivors of FGM/C.

SDG 16 – PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

MUSLIM LEADERS AND SCHOLARS FROM EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA RE-AFFIRM DECLARATION AGAINST VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE REGION

By Doreen Kanssiime, UN Development Programme (UNDP)

Kampala, Uganda: Muslim religious leaders and scholars from Eastern and Southern Africa gathered in Kampala have agreed on a framework to enable them work together to fight against all forms of extremist activities in the name of Islam. The framework was agreed upon during a two day summit on countering, responding and preventing violent extremism in Africa which was organised by International Interfaith Peace Corps (IIPP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)’s Regional Service Centre for Africa. The declaration follows a similar one signed by religious leaders in West Africa against all forms of extremist activities in the name of Islam.

The summit was intended to respond to one of the most challenging problems in recent history - violent extremism. A problem that Ms. Rosa Malango UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative for Uganda said is currently contributing to a historical reversal of the continent’s development gains. “If it is not addressed today, it threatens to curtail Africa’s development prospects for decades to come,” she emphasized. Ms. Malango also emphasized the need for Muslim religious leaders to get involved saying that fighting against violent extremism was a collective responsibility.
“The fact that violent extremism has been affecting Muslims and Muslim communities most, highlights the need for the engagement of Muslim religious leaders if we are to help communities that are vulnerable to the activities and operations of violent extremist groups. Communities need to be empowered to be a vital part of the solution to the growth of violent extremism, and to this end your leadership as religious leaders is imperative,” she said at the opening of the summit.

Agreeing with her, Sheikh Shaban Mubajje, the Mufti of Uganda said that it was the responsibility of Muslims to stand up and educate the people about Islam and the fact that it does not promote violent extremism. “Terrorism is the epitome of injustice because it takes innocent lives and the Koran calls all Muslims to act justly. Acts of terrorism are therefore haram, forbidden in Islam,” Sheikh Mubajje said.

As part of its support to prevent violent extremism on the continent, UNDP produced a regional strategy on “Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa.” The strategy emphasises a development approach underpinned by a policy framework that calls for individuals and institutions to be consistently engaged so that they understand what drives and enables violent extremism in Africa. The strategy is being implement through a programme targeting “epicenter”, “spillover” and “at risk” countries in Africa. This approach enables a tailored response for countries where extremist groups are active; countries where impacts are being felt; and countries which exhibit some of the underlying and root causes of violent extremism.

The UNDP Country office in Uganda is also working with the Government of Uganda to develop a national strategy on Preventing Violent Extremism as part the regional consultations led by IGAD to develop a regional strategy for Eastern Africa.
In his opening remarks at the summit, Hon. Kirunda Kivejinja, the third deputy Prime Minister and Minister of East African Affairs reiterated the Government of Uganda’s commitment to fighting violent extremism. “We remain firm in our stand on terrorism,” Hon. Kivejinja said adding that the government’s main efforts were geared towards promoting peace through engagement with various leaders and communities with Uganda and the region. “It’s for this reason that I am pleased to see this summit engaging regional Muslim leaders and scholars as partners and advocates against violent extremism,” Hon. Kivejinja said.

At the end of the two-day summit, the Muslim leaders and scholars affirmed the Abuja Declaration Abuja declaration of October 2016 which was issued by religious leaders from West Africa, against all forms of extremist activities in the name of Islam, while affirming the preservation, promotion, and development of the sanctity and dignity of life for all individuals, families and communities.
FISH FARM NETS BENEFITS FOR CONGOLESE REFUGEES AND UGANDAN HOSTS

By Rocco Nuri, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Janine puts on a life vest, ties a scarf around her head and jumps into a small boat with the captain and two young men. The vessel cuts through the still water at a slow speed, leaving a silky wake. After a short ride across Lake Rwamunga, in Western Uganda, the captain pulls over near a floating net cage and turns off the engine. Janine loosens the bag beneath her seat, scoops out a cup of brown pellets and scatters them on the water. Soon, a shoal of white tilapia breaks the surface to feed. With a large net, she scoops up 40 fish before heading back to shore.

A refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 32-year-old Janine is a member of a village fish farming association. Established a year ago with the help of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and UNDP, the UN Development Programme, it brings refugees and locals together in Uganda around the common goal of making a living. "The UN gave us the nets, cages and training," says Janine with conviction. "We offered our time and commitment." The group receives business training, emphasizing savings and loan best practices. Technical support, including how to produce low-cost fish food pellets and other innovative ideas, is provided.

Village savings and loan associations like the fish farm group on the shores of Lake Rwamunga have multiplied in Uganda in the past decade, providing simple savings and loan facilities to communities that do not have easy access to formal financial services.

Each group, normally composed of farmers and animal breeders, has 15 to 25 members who meet and save regularly by buying shares. Savings are also put towards a loan fund, from which members can borrow money to start their own businesses. The fish farming association is made up of 20 refugees from Oruchinga settlement and five Ugandans from a nearby village. They take turns every day to feed and harvest the fish, and sell the day's catch. The group keeps a book to record withdrawals and deposits made by the members, including payment of individual shares towards the loan fund, and loan requests.

Savings book in her hands, a Ugandan member of the association, Aisha, keeps record of the transactions with villagers as they buy the fish. Within minutes, all the fish are gone. "It was a good day," she says as she deposits the day's income in the group's cash box. A single mother of two, she joined the group nearly a year ago. "I was in a very bad situation then. I could not even afford a bar of soap for my children, let alone buy food," she says, her gaze fixed on the ground. A regular saver with the association, she was subsequently able to take out a loan and open a small restaurant. "Now that I have a job and the restaurant, I feel like a free person," she adds with a smile. "My life has changed within months. I am able to buy food for my children, pay for their education and settle my rent every month without delay."
Janine, a single mother with two children and elderly parents to look after, also benefits from the programme. After paying in to the association for a period, she got her first loan six months ago to build a new house. “I was ashamed to have my parents live in that old hut,” she says, pointing to a large crack running across the side of one wall of her old home. “But that’s a big project ... and for a big project, one needs a lot of money.” She started small, with a US$30 loan. She bought a pregnant pig and within weeks was able to sell seven piglets. “By then, I had enough money to pay for construction materials and labour. My dream was at my fingertips,” she says.

By ensuring both the refugees and their hosts benefit, the savings and loan programme in Uganda is part of a new response to displacement that is gaining traction worldwide. Last year’s New York Declaration endorsed by all 193 member states of the United Nations reinforced the need to enhance refugee self-reliance through a ‘whole-of-society’ approach as a pre-requisite to fully realize a refugee response that is comprehensive and sustainable.
“Everyone has a role to play,” says Bornwell Kantande, UNHCR’s representative in Uganda. “Once we tap into outside expertise and innovative partnerships, we can make a difference and help refugees become more (like) entrepreneurs, consumers and business partners and less (like) beneficiaries.” For her part, Janine is working hard to build on her achievements, and is already dreaming of the future. “I want to turn my house into a crop store for local farmers,” she says. “If I make enough money, I will buy myself a car and drive around like everyone else.”

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