OVERVIEW

• In Uganda, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development recently launched YouthConnekt, a platform aimed at giving an opportunity for youth to become part of those developing solutions to address issues of unemployment and inclusion in economic and political processes.

• A new partnership with private sector leaders was established when Mr. Michele Sidibe, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV&AIDS (UNAIDS), launched the “One Dollar Initiative” in Uganda. This innovative financing mechanism will help diversify stakeholders ready to supplement existing resources in the fight against HIV and AIDS in Uganda.

• On 28th June, UNAIDS and StarTimes Uganda signed a memorandum of understanding to better leverage investments in health in Uganda. The focus is on raising awareness about HIV prevention among the adolescents and young people with a specific target on men as part of the provision of health services.

• Uganda remains Africa’s largest home to refugees. According to the UNHCR Uganda Flash Update on the South Sudan Emergency Response of 10th July 2017, the total number of refugees and asylum seekers stands at 1,309,698 of which 977,746 are from South Sudan as of 1st July 2017.

• Uganda hosted a five-day Outbreak Response Simulation Exercise Management Training with support from the World Health Organization (WHO). The course, designed for staff of the Ministries of Health and WHO country offices reinforced their capacity to prepare for and effectively respond to public health emergencies.

• UNICEF is supporting the scaling up of birth registration services and issuance of birth notifications for children under 5 years, in the districts of Masaka, Kayunga, Kanungu and Rubanda. In these districts, birth registration services are currently offered only in hospitals.
UGANDA LAUNCHES THE YOUTHCONNEKT INITIATIVE

By Doreen Kansiime, UN Development Programme (UNDP)

Mr. Pius Bigirimana, Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (centre with tie), Ms. Rosa Malango, the UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator on his left and Ms. Almaz Gebru on his right pose with the youth at the launch of YouthConnekt Uganda. The three of them sign up the launch board on the right. (Photo credit: UNDP Uganda).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Uganda in partnership with the country’s Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development have launched YouthConnekt, a platform aimed at enabling youth to be part of developing solutions to address issues of youth unemployment and inclusion in economic and political processes.

The programme which was started in Rwanda as a platform for bringing young people together and linking them to the public, private and civil society sectors is also a catalyst for
partnerships that tap into young peoples’ potential to lead development. Speaking at the launch of the event, Mr. Pius Bigirimana Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development said that Uganda’s problem is not the number of the youth per se, but what proportion of youth are actively engaged economically.

He added that the youth in Uganda continue to share a disproportionate burden of poverty, unemployment and diseases, partially as a result of limited opportunities to obtain practical skills and severe challenges in attaining viable employment.

“The concept of YouthConnekt is therefore timely to enhance connectivity of existing youth innovations and building partnerships among all stakeholders in youth development. YouthConnekt should enable us adopt practices and approaches that work well within our legal frameworks,” Mr. Bigirimana said.

YouthConnekt Uganda is aimed at connecting youth to their role models, peers, resources, skills, economic opportunities. The YouthConnekt Uganda Initiative will scale up existing innovative initiatives in the country. Some of these initiatives include the Youth Livelihood Program (YLP), Youth Venture Capital Fund (YEVCF), Skilling Uganda, Green Jobs and Fair Labour Markets, Youth Entrepreneurship Facility, Pakasa and Young Achievers’ Awards among others, all of which were designed to address youth unemployment.

The United Nations System in Uganda has also promoted initiatives that encourage youth Innovation such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO)’s Youth to Youth fund model which allows youth in Uganda to come up with up with innovative ideas and the UNDP led Adjumani design challenge which engaged youth from both refugee and host communities in Adjumani district to turn their challenges into opportunities using Human centred design. The innovative approach enabled the young people to work together to identify pragmatic solutions for existing problems.

“Our hope is that YouthConnekt will give youth space to create novel innovations that will enable them to contribute to reducing the youth unemployment challenge in the country today, Ms. Rosa Malango, the UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator said while opening the event. She added that UNDP has also partnered with Outbox, a youth innovation hub to develop an online youth innovators platform that will allow youth to share their innovative ideas as well as link them to role models and funding institutions which can help them develop their ideas further.

“At this time last week, the world came to Uganda for the first time ever for the Uganda Solidarity Summit on Refugees – which re-positioned Uganda as a place of innovations that respond to development and humanitarian issues. We therefore need to think about how Uganda can influence Africa’s emerging development approach through initiatives such as YouthConnekt,” Ms. Malango said. She also called on youth to use this platform to discuss
what kind of solutions they can come up with to address the contemporary issues affecting the country such as climate change, environment degradation and refugees among others.

Mr. Njoya Tikum, A Policy and Programme Advisor, at UNDP’s Regional Service Centre agreeing her called on the youth to innovate around the various development challenges that Uganda and Africa face and not just within the ICT sector. He also encouraged them to look out for partnerships that would enable them to promote their innovations. The UNDP and the entire UN family is great at supporting young innovators make this connection with the right partners,” Mr. Tikum said.

Uganda’s YouthConnekt will focus on three out of five components that make up the programme. These include the boot camp for innovators, a hangout to connect the youth to available opportunities and finally a champions’ event to those who excel in the boot camp but also recognise inspirational and innovative youth for their creativity and innovations as well as their ability to create employment and engage their fellow youth. In July 2017, the YouthConnekt initiative was launched as an Africa initiative in Rwanda during an event attended by Heads of State and Youth Ministers Summit from all over Africa. Uganda’s roadmap for the initiative was well received by participants.

SDG 3 – GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

UGANDA’S PRIVATE SECTOR TAKING STRIDES IN LEADING DOMESTIC FINANCING FOR THE HIV AND AIDS RESPONSE

By David Mawejje, International Labour Organization (ILO)

“We shall not end HIV and AIDS through charity but through investment, a charity walk cannot deliver services to our people”, was the key message delivered by Mr. Michele Sidibe, the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations programme on HIV&AIDS (UNAIDS), at the launch of the “One Dollar Initiative” on 7th June 2017 at the Serena Hotel in Kampala. The One Dollar Initiative (ODI) is an innovative financing mechanism that is established to supplement existing resources for the HIV and AIDS response in Uganda, as one of the strategies towards attaining SDG 3 on ending HIV and AIDS by 2030. The Executive Director, who was accompanied by the outgoing UNAIDS Country Director Ms. Amakobe Sande and the incoming one Ms. Karusa Kiragu officiated the launch of the one dollar initiative which is
led by the private sector in joint collaboration with ILO and UNAIDS. It builds on the philosophy of promoting public good and the need to improve the quality of life of people. 158 invited guests attended including CEOs of business organizations and associations including the Private Sector Foundation of Uganda, Tropical Heat, PACE Uganda, East African Breweries, Real Foundation, Crown Beverages, Case Medical Centre, Pearl Engineering, UCC, Jubilee Insurance, Bank of Africa, HopeNet, National Insurance Corporation, Uganda Baati, National Social Security Fund, Statewide Insurance Company, Crest Foam, Uganda Tea Association, CIPLA Quality Chemicals, Mas Group, RHU, NBS TV, Monitor Publications, Eskom, to mention but a few.

Mr. Michele Sidibe, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV&AIDS (UNAIDS), launched the “One Dollar Initiative” for the private sector in Kampala

The one dollar initiative follows protracted meetings that the ILO organized for the private sector associations and affiliated members, initially to scale up HIV&AIDS and the world of work responses through Corporate Social Responsibility approaches. The meetings however noted that the CRS approaches were not sufficient to sustainably address the enormous problem of HIV&AIDS. In most cases, these interventions were limited to the provision of scholastic materials, household items, mosquito nets, occasional HIV testing services to the orphans, care givers, communities and workers respectively. In addition, CRS activities were used as a way of improving the corporate image of the companies through associating with the poor and vulnerable, but did not provide lasting benefits to the beneficiaries. It was
therefore time for the private sector to engage meaningfully and step up its response beyond the conventional CRS approaches, and thus the one dollar initiative.

In his keynote address, Mr. Michele Sidibe called for the need to learn from business models of efficiency in doing business and the need for maximum return on investment. Any dollar invested must have returns on investment and multiplication factors to bring in more dollars. He added that this could only be achieved by working with the private sector innovation traits, and cited CIPLA Quality Chemicals as an example. We could not have managed to give treatment to millions of people on our own, however, our work with the private sector led to a change in protocols of treatment and other approaches such as inventing generics which has made treatments more affordable. “Today we have 1 pill regimen which has been possible because of the innovation of the private sector and we look forward to have a treatment regimen of one to two injections per month”. The perception of most people about the private sector was from the angle of dollars only which is important but a wrong approach, because the added value of the private sector is more important than the dollars we demand for. Mr. Sidibe was impressed that ODI was also focusing on sustainability of the gains made, because just like Uganda, most countries with over 90% people on treatment are able to do this thanks primarily to resources from The Global Fund and PEPFAR. He mentioned that if those resources were halted, then many people would not be able to access treatment. Overall, the ODI will not only seek for financial assistance but also presents a new way of work, especially in keeping the momentum of the private sector efforts that can add value to the HIV & AIDS response in Uganda in attaining SDG 3 on “ending AIDS by 2030”. The private sector, he said, can also help us to transform the way we deliver services, help us reach people with advocacy and promotional messages - such as the message of knowing one’s HIV status, transfer of competences, help in the manufacturing of drugs and many other aspects where they can contribute. He observed that the one dollar initiative will be borrowed by the rest of the world because it was a great initiative.

PARTNERING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO LEVERAGE FINANCING FOR BETTER HEALTH: UNAIDS AND STARTIMES UGANDA PARTNER TO RAISE AWARENESS ON HIV

By Caroline Magambo, UNAIDS

On 28th June, UNAIDS and StarTimes Uganda signed a memorandum of understanding to better leverage healthcare services in Uganda with a clear focus on raising awareness about HIV prevention among the adolescents and young people with a specific target on men. Uganda is the first country to sign this partnership at the country level after the signing at the
global level between UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé and StarTimes’ President Pang Xinxing in Beijing, China on 12 May.

The partnership is aimed at working together to attain the UNAIDS global and national target of achieving the 90-90-90 targets by 2020 that will contribute to ending the AIDS epidemic in Uganda by 2030. Through this cooperation, UNAIDS and StarTimes will partner in resource mobilization, advocacy, publicity and awareness raising for HIV prevention initiatives. Signing on behalf of UNAIDS, Amakobe Sande the outgoing Uganda Country Director said that more efforts should be focused on having men go for HIV testing and treatment to achieve the 90-90-90 target set for 2020. This partnership is in line with the Presidential Fast Track Initiative on ending AIDS as a public health threat in Uganda by 2030. Having StarTimes on board re-echoes the urgency of Uganda’s need to be able to generate sustainable domestic resources for the HIV response.

“AIDS is the public enemy of all mankind and we are honoured to have the opportunity to work with UNAIDS in the mission of ending AIDS. We will use our digital media platform to create content that appeals to youth and adolescents. That way, we shall be able to convey messages that sensitize, alert and warn them about the dangers of careless living. Enhancing
awareness of HIV is the first step in helping the people,” said Andy Wang the StarTimes Uganda CEO.

Calling it business unusual, Reuben Twinomujuni from the Uganda AIDS Commission said government had kick started the efforts to end AIDS by 2030 citing the launch of the fast track initiative. “The rate of death that currently stands at 28,000 translates to 77 deaths daily. This is unacceptable so anybody coming to partner with us is welcome” he said. He pointed out that the Uganda AIDS Commission has rolled out massive awareness on prevention and treatment of HIV in all schools countrywide as well as rural communities.

UGANDA HOSTS TRAINING ON DISEASE OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT FOR THE AFRICAN REGION

By Edmond Mwebembezi, World Health Organisation (WHO)

Uganda hosted a five-day Outbreak Response Simulation Exercise Management Training with support from the World Health Organization (WHO). The course, designed for staff of the Ministries of Health and WHO country offices served to reinforce their capacity to prepare for and effectively respond to public health emergencies. Participants from Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, The Gambia and Uganda are attending the training using the recently published The WHO Exercise Manual (2017). This practical manual includes simulation exercises guidance and tools on the design and implementation of different types of simulation exercises.

To support the roll-out of the manual, this training programme aims at creating a pool of exercises, developers and facilitators. The first module of the training programme on tabletop exercises was tested in October 2016. As part of the “learning by doing” approach of the training, participants conceptualized, developed and delivered an actual day long functional exercise for the Ugandan Public Health Emergency Operations Centre on the fourth day of the training at the Ministry of Health Emergency Operation Center in Kampala.
Participants at the Outbreak Response Simulation Exercise Management Training with support from WHO in Kampala

Uganda was chosen as the host because of the availability of a fully operational and state-of-the-art Public Health Emergency Operating Center (PHEOC), an operational public health emergency response plan and has already undergone trainings on outbreak response management. The Acting WHO Representative in Uganda Dr. Jack Abdouliie commended the WHO Country Health Emergency Preparedness and International Health Regulations (CPI) Department for designing the Simulation Exercise Manual as well as the practical training, saying, “This will be very instrumental in enabling countries to prepare for public health emergency outbreaks.”

Simulation exercises play a key role in identifying the strengths and gaps in the development and implementation of preparedness and response measures. WHO emphasizes the use of exercises to ensure that public health emergency response systems are in place to manage health emergencies. Simulation exercises have been recognized, as key pillars under the International Health Regulations (IHR) Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, endorsed by the World Health Assembly in 2016.

SDG 17 – NO POVERTY

UNICEF TO SUPPORT BIRTH REGISTRATION IN FIVE MORE DISTRICTS

By Catherine Ntabadde Makumbi, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
UNICEF is supporting the scaling up of birth registration services and issuance of birth notifications for children under 5 years, in the districts of Masaka, Kayunga, Kanungu and Rubanda. In these districts, birth registration services are currently offered only in hospitals.

Once the children are registered, they will be issued with a birth notification record, which will then give them an opportunity to access a birth certificate from the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA). Operational in 135 hospitals and 80 out of 116 district local governments, birth registration through Mobile Vital Records System (MVRS) is ensuring that no child is left without an official identity and legal protection. MVRS is an automated registration service, launched in 2011 with support from UNICEF. The addition of the five districts will bring the number of districts providing birth registration services to 85.

During a recent media field visit to the districts of Masaka, Rakai and Lwengo, it was discovered that children without birth certificates or those that are not registered are likely to miss out on a number of government services like education, health, justice for children among others. The team also learnt of children who had received services like education grants, ARV support, fast tracking of court cases and stopping of a child marriage case as result of their parents having secured birth certificates for them.
Augustine Wassago, UNICEF’s Child Protection Specialist (Identification & Registration) says extending the service to the five districts will involve supporting NIRA to orient the duty bearers at district, Sub County and town council levels, and providing resources like registration materials, computers, and data for internet to use. He also added that once the service is established in a district or hospital, the rest of the population aged over 5 years who might not have birth certificates can access it. “What this means is that UNICEF will be facilitating these districts to provide this service to all children below 5 years,” he explained. In the districts where this service is offered, UNICEF supports home-home visits to enable them clear the backlog of children below 5 years who are not registered, Wassago expounded during the visit.

The LC 5 Chairman Masaka district Jude Mbabali welcomed the good news of extending the service to the district. He underscored the importance of the service and narrated how he once intervened in the Makerere University quota system where students purportedly born in Masaka were admitted for the scheme. Mbabali explained that the said students did not have proper identification to prove they were born in the district and hence disqualified. The quota system was introduced by government to address the imbalances in admitting students on the basis of the general performance countrywide. To qualify for admission under the quota system, one must be a born of that district and his or her parents must be permanent residents of the district.

Lillian Namugambe Musisi, Masaka District Community Development Officer revealed that when all children are not registered, it is difficult for the district to plan for them. “Some caretakers do not ascertain the ages of the children they are with. There are cases in the district where these unregistered children have missed out on opportunities,” she added. The Masaka district chairman, community development officer and the child family protection unit in Masaka called for increased awareness about the importance of birth registration, noting that some community members have just realised that birth certificates are as important as the National IDs, all issued by NIRA.

The merging of birth and death registration with national IDs under NIRA provides a step towards a sustainable government-run Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system, which will ensure that all children have access to birth registration and certification in a timely manner.

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