

What are the challenges faced by young people in your country

Though Africa has registered tremendous gains ever since independence though still considerable challenges still face the continent especially the youth who in 2015 were 226 million aged 15-24 and expected to increase by 42% by 2030 therefore there is need to utilize the youth population so as to take advantage of the demographic dividend therefore Uganda's youth problems aren't different from the rest of the countries in the Sub Saharan Africa. Unemployment is one of the major challenges faced by Uganda with statistics putting the unemployment rate at 64% of the youth population national definition (15 to30) according to National bureau of statistics as of 2012. Uganda has gained relative stability in the 32 years of the NRM government but its hasn't been able to create enough jobs despite the growth of the private sector over the years as a result of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) carried out in1992.The majority of the youthful population are still employed in subsistence farming whereas graduates lack skills that are employable due to the theoretical nature of Uganda's education system.

Poverty and Ignorance: Despite the gains made Africa and Uganda in particular still suffers from high levels of ignorance and poverty. Uganda has had 21 years of free universal primary Education (UPE) plus 12 years of Universal Secondary Education (USE) which has greatly increased the number of enrolled students in both primary and secondary schools especially the girls who weren't attending school due to economic and cultural problems but questions are being asked about the quality of education, teachers, shortage of classrooms, rate of drop-outs in both primary and secondary schools due to early pregnancies for girls and boys are asked to help out in the farms rather than go to school

HIV/AIDS: There has been a resurgence in the virus amongst the youth. There is a high infection rate among girls and boys aged 15-22 despite Uganda having been one of the pioneering countries in the fight against AIDS on the continent during the 1990s though there is still a decline in the general infection rate in the entire population. The resurgence has been as a result of unemployment, Lifestyle changes among the youth, Concurrent multiple partners.

The World Health Program has characterized mental health as a sickness but in Uganda they is still stigma and misunderstanding about mental illness Uganda has only one major psychiatric hospital which serves the whole country. Mental health issues are on the rise among urban youth due to social economic vulnerabilities and drug abuse but hardly anyone ever gets treated for the conditions

Their Other challenges faced by the youth in Uganda including Climate Change and its effects on Agricultural Output and food security, High Population growth rate which greatly affects living standards and creates urban slums, Land Ownership, Accessibility to Loans for development, Tribalism and Nepotism where people are employed basing on tribe rather than skills.

2. Examples of discrimination against young people in the exercise of their rights

Freedom of Expression: Uganda stills maintains a considerable grip over its media years after privatizing the sector, stories of journalists being arrested and Harassed isn't news anymore. But the growth of the internet and social media has created new avenues of expression for the youth which led to the government shutting down the internet during the 2016 elections and the arrest of prominent social media bloggers Stella Nyanzi and Shaka Robert alias "TVO" only shows how determined the government on clapping down dissidents.

Copyright: The Arts industry has been a great avenue of employment for the youth employing a wide range of young people in different capacities in the industry from musicians to videographers, photographers etc but there is no substantial laws used to protect ones artistic creation recently a Musician(Maurice Kirya) sued a telecom company for using his song as a caller tune yet he wasn't made aware after a protracted court case the case was settled out of court. Musicians have complained about the unfair terms given to them by telecom companies when using their compositions as a Marketing tool and most of them lack the financial muscles to challenge such companies legally.

Don't Discriminate: Nepotism and Tribalism have eaten the very fabric of our Ugandan society. The country has been divided along tribal lines which sow seeds of violence among the youth who should be forging away forward as Ugandans not as members of a particular tribe. A recent survey carried out by Daily Monitor one of the leading dailies found out that most top jobs, ministerial posts, security posts were dominated by people from the west where the president comes from such studies just create division in a country that has long been divided among tribal lines since its creation Uganda as a country was formed by a multitude of different ethnic groups with no shared national interests but regional interests.

Right to Public Assembly: There exist no rights to public assembly for citizens who are disgruntled with affairs of the state. The Public Order Management Bill(POM) passed in 2011 further curtails such rights in the bill everyone planning to hold a rally is required to write to the inspector general of police for permission to demonstrate. The IGP then decides who to grant such permission and also decides the date and venue. The bill has been partisan in curtailing youth voices and making them passive members of society because the same law doesn't necessarily apply to people of the ruling party when showing support/loyalty to the president

3. Are you aware of policies and programs aimed at supporting young people to realize their rights? If so please describe them

Yes I am aware of government policies put up to support young people from realizing their dreams Government has over the years come up with programmes designed at alleviating the youth from poverty and using them as a tool of development and social change alongside the private sector the following are some of the programs and policies

Youth Livelihood Program

The youth livelihood program began in financial year 2013-14 rolled out by government of Uganda through the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development to address the unemployment and skills gap amongst the youth. Its design is based on the community driven demand model and the programme is being financed by the government of Uganda own resources with possibility of developments partners support where need be. The program is intended to increase self employment amongst the unemployed and poor youth all over Uganda. The fund is administered in form of interest free revolving fund to youth groups that will be formed and facilitated by local governments the approved budget for the first 5 years is Ug Shs 5 billion. The objectives of the program are as follows

- 1: To Provide youth with marketable vocational skills and tool kits for self employment and job creation
- 2 To provide financial support to enable the youth establish income generating activities
- 3 To provide the youth with entrepreneurship and life skills as an integral part of the livelihood
- 4 To provide youth with relevant knowledge and information for altitudinal change

Support to the youth is delivered through youth interest groups(YIG) of 10-15 members(with at least 30% female) which enables the program reach out to more members in a more cost effective manner while at the same time ensuring individual members co guarantee one another for purposes of implementing their project.

National Youth Policy (2001)

The policy was drafted in 2001 under the guidance of Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development to cater for the marginalization of the youth population who made up 29% of the 21.6 million population then. In their situational analysis the policy identified several underlying issues affecting the youth e.g. Youth and Gender, Youth and Crime, Youth and Environment etc. The policy advocated for mobilization of resources to promote youth participation and integration in the mainstream of national development. The principles underlying the policy were Gender inclusiveness, Good governance and National unity, Equity and Accessibility, Youth Participation. The policy emphasized that successful implementation of the policy depended on the priority areas and action points developed to address the policy mission, goal, and objectives. The strategic action plans were: Education, Training and Capacity Building, Employment and Enterprise Building, Youth Involvement, Participation and Leadership, Management, Coordination and Partnerships etc. It emphasizes that implementation of the policies depended on all stakeholders involved both national and international and taking a multi- sectoral approach.

National Youth Venture Fund

The national youth venture fund program was introduced in 2011 and its major initiatives are enterprise development, job creation and business skills training and its being operated through ministry of finance planning and economic development and several participating commercial banks. The objective is to provide venture capital debt financing to viable projects proposed by young entrepreneurs as well as establish benefits from associated mentored services from participating banks. The fund is aimed at supporting the growth of viable and sustainable SMEs in the private sector. A four prolonged youth employment strategy was introduced with the four components being Youth Entrepreneurship Venture Capital Fund, Youth Entrepreneurship Training Program, Business Development Skills Clinic, and Market Infrastructure Development

Northern Uganda Social Action Fund Youth Opportunities Program

Northern Uganda has gone through two decades of war. The program was set up in 2003 under NUSAF under the Office of the Prime Minister to empower communities in Northern Uganda by enhancing their capacity to systematically identify, prioritize, and plan for their needs and implement suitable development initiatives that improve socio economic services and opportunities. The youth Opportunity Program was added in 2005 as a principal youth focused program to target the unemployed/under employed youths. Participants are given funds to invest in various business ventures e.g. barbering/hair dressing/agricultural production/poultry etc

Other Programs introduced include Graduated Venture Fund that works like a loan scheme where participating students are expected to repay back the loan after completion of their university/textiary education.

There are also some upcoming bills in the 10th parliament waiting to be debated but their gist and impact on youth empowerment is not yet known they are National Youth Service Scheme Bill, National Youth Council amendment Bill

4. How are youth organizations or youth led structures involved in developing , implementing ,monitoring and evaluating policies and programs on youth in your country

Sensitizing the youth about government policies through various Medias e.g through radio talk shows that have a wider national coverage than any other media in the country. Every region has a youth representative that ensures that the youth interest are represented at national level (Parliament)

Youth organisations are actively involved in monitoring the budget process and resources allocated to youth empowerment programs through debates so as to demand an equal share of the national resources as allocated in the national budget and National development plan (NDP)

The internet has also provided a free medium for discussion among the urban youth and intelligentsia about government programs, policies e.g Whatsapp groups, Twitter, Facebook have provided a chance for the youth to monitor, evaluate government programs while offering their uncandid opinions on what should be done.

Civil Society Organisations are involved in advocating for the right approaches and transparency in utilizing the resources that have been allocated

Youth Councils that are found at district levels are used at grassroot level to engage with community leaders in issues facing the community. Youth councils are also used to engage youth with government programs and also give any updates or partnerships with non government organizations and upcoming community events

Uganda Parliament Forum on Youth Affairs(UPFYA) formed in the 8th parliament by a number of youthful members periodically assess policy formulation and implementation of government programs with a view to establish the extent to which youth issues are being taken care of and whether youth are benefitting from such programs

Other government programs like National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) according to NAADS Master Document fostering participation is one of the principles As target beneficiaries farmers are expected to actively be involved in the identification of needs, setting of priorities, formulation of plans, and as well as monitoring and evaluating outputs and outcomes

What measures at international level would facilitate/support the realization of young peoples rights

First and foremost the main concern for youth is employment Uganda has been ranked among the best country in East Africa in the ease to do business index considering the initiatives put in place by government to attract investors. Therefore I implore international investors to come and invest In Uganda because of its diversity, beautiful landscapes and untapped opportunities in various sectors and its magnificent weather which Winston Churchill called the pearl of Africa. Uganda also possess a very entrepreneur spirit among its youth which Is a gold mine for any business person.

Uganda has signed several export agreements with European union, United states of America but in those memoradums of understanding a certain percentage of the exports exported should be produced by youth led enterprises so as to encourage other enterprenuers to follow suit.

The international community should also condemn in the strongest terms and actions the plight of African youth in the Middle East and Libya who are being treated in an inhumane manner yet their only crime was looking for better ways to take care of their families

Increasing pressure on African governments to include youth organizations more in the formulation of youth policies rather than using them as political chips in the political arena. The youth are more detached from government programs because they aren't really involved in the formulation process.

Any other issues you would like to share

Uganda has over the years had the best policy documents and several countries along have benchmarked our policies but Uganda faces a bigger task in the implementation of such policies to realities that bring considerable change to one's life. Questions should be asked about public administration of Uganda's state institutions because the government's answer has always been duplication and formation of authorities as a solution for poor policy implementation.

About the author

The author is a 26 year old Uganda who holds a bachelors degree in business administration who is passionate about Africa and interested in Public policy, Governance, international relations, Economics and History.