

## About Elpis Initiative Uganda: A Movement for Youth Empowerment

Born in 2022, Elpis Initiative Uganda represents a new vision for youth empowerment in Uganda. Founders Nkuutu Brian Moses and Feni Desmond witnessed firsthand how traditional approaches to health education failed to truly reach young people, inspiring them to pioneer an innovative model that speaks to youth in their own language.

Our organization has rapidly evolved from a local initiative to a nationwide movement with presence across six strategic locations. Each region presents unique challenges that inform our tailored programming - from urban health education in Kampala to post-conflict mental health support in Gulu, from rural outreach in Luuka to specialized interventions in pastoral communities of Kotido. This geographic diversity reflects our commitment to meeting young people where they are, addressing their specific needs through contextually relevant approaches.

At the core of our work lies a simple but powerful truth: when young people engage creatively with important issues, transformation happens. We've seen how interactive programming creates safe spaces for dialogue about topics often shrouded in silence and stigma. Our methods foster not just awareness but genuine understanding, equipping participants with knowledge they internalize and share within their communities.

The impact of this approach has been both profound and measurable. In just two years, we've directly engaged over 1,200 young Ugandans, establishing partnerships with educational institutions and community organizations across our operational areas. The recognition we've received, validates what we've always believed - that innovative, youth-centered approaches can achieve what conventional methods cannot.

Our 10 Million Hearts, One Cause Campaign embodies this spirit of innovation. More than a fundraising initiative, it's a growing movement that invites ordinary Ugandans to become part of the solution through small but meaningful contributions. The campaign's success - engaging thousands of donors and funding numerous community projects demonstrates the power of collective action and the growing culture of giving among Uganda's youth.

As we look ahead, Elpis Initiative Uganda remains committed to expanding and deepening our impact. We're focused on building sustainable structures, training facilitators, developing replicable program models, and establishing youth leadership councils. Our vision includes creating platforms that amplify youth voices nationally and forging partnerships that extend our reach across East Africa.

What makes Elpis Initiative Uganda unique isn't just what we do, but how we do it. Every program, every campaign, every interaction is rooted in principles of youth participation, creative engagement, and community ownership. We don't just deliver messages, we create experiences that transform perspectives and inspire action.

This is more than an organization - it's a movement powered by the energy, creativity and vision of Uganda's youth. From the young participants who become peer educators to the community members who champion our work, Elpis Initiative Uganda represents a collective effort to build a healthier, more equitable future. We invite you to join us in this journey of transformation - as a participant, a partner, or a supporter. Together, we're proving that when young people are truly engaged, meaningful change is not just possible, but inevitable.

## **A Message from Our Executive Director, Mr. Feni Desmond.**

### **To the Youth of Uganda and Beyond,**

As young people, we face some of the greatest challenges of our time, HIV/AIDS and mental health crises that disproportionately affect our generation. These are not just health issues; they are threats to our future, our dreams, and our nation's progress. But I say with a firm belief: we are not victims. We are the solution.

At Elpis Initiative Uganda, we recognize that the fight against HIV and mental health stigma cannot be won with silence or complacency. It requires **bold action, innovation, and ownership** from us the youth. Too often, we wait for others to solve our problems, but the truth is, no one will care for our future more than we do. That is why I call upon every young Ugandan to stand up, speak out, and take charge of this fight.

Another harsh reality we must confront is dependency on foreign funding. While international support has played a role in development, history has shown us its fragility like when President Trump cut aid to USAID, leaving many programs stranded. If we truly want sustainable change, we must fund our own movements. That is why Elpis Initiative Uganda champions initiatives like **10 Million Hearts, I Cause** because real transformation begins when we take responsibility for our own solutions.

Let's be honest, conventional methods are failing us. Lectures and pamphlets are not enough to engage today's youth. At Elpis Initiative Uganda, we break the mold by using creative, relatable, and interactive approaches that truly resonate. Our success reaching over 1,200 young lives in just two years proves that when we meet youth where they are, real change happens.

But we cannot do this alone. I call upon every Ugandan young and old, artist or activist, student or professional to join us. Support Elpis Initiative Uganda not just for our sake, but for the future of our country. Whether through donations, volunteering, or simply spreading our message, your contribution matters.

The time for waiting is over. The power to shape Uganda's future lies in our hands, our voices, and our actions. Together, let's build a nation where no young person suffers in silence, where health is a right, not a privilege, and where Ugandans fund Ugandan solutions.

Join us. The revolution starts now.

**With determination,**

**Feni Desmond**

**Executive Director, Elpis Initiative Uganda**

### **Key Elements:**

1. Urgency & Ownership – Directly addresses youth to take leadership in health advocacy.
2. Economic Independence – Highlights risks of foreign aid dependency, promoting local funding.
3. Innovation Over Tradition – Positions Elpis as the modern solution for youth engagement.
4. Call to Collective Action – Inspires nationwide support from all sectors.

## **What We Do at Elpis Initiative Uganda**

At Elpis Initiative Uganda, we're rewriting the narrative around youth health and empowerment through our innovative, arts-driven approach. Since our founding in 2022, we've pioneered a movement that transforms how Uganda's youth engage with critical issues like HIV/AIDS, mental health, and gender equality.

## **Our Philosophy: Youth at the Center**

We believe solutions for young people must be created with young people. That's why every program we design puts youth voices first, using creative expression as our primary tool for education and advocacy. Traditional methods often fail to resonate, we're changing that by meeting youth where they are, speaking their language, and addressing their real needs.

## Our Core Initiatives

### 1. Advocacy Through Artistry

We don't just talk about change, we create it through powerful artistic expression. Our work has shifted national conversations around HIV stigma and mental health by: Training youth advocates who use creative mediums to influence policy, Producing award-winning short films that challenge misconceptions, Organizing nationwide exhibitions that turn personal stories into public dialogue and hosting viral X-Space discussions engaging thousands digitally.

### 2. Community Outreach That Connects

Our grassroots programs reach youth across six key regions with tailored interventions: **Kampala**: Urban youth engagement through digital and performing arts, **Gulu**: Post-conflict mental health healing via creative therapies, **Kotido**: Culturally-sensitive programs for pastoral communities, **Luuka**: Rural SRHR education through community murals and theater, **Arua**: Border community health initiatives, **Mbarara**: University-focused creative health education.

### 3. Strategic Partnerships for Sustainability

We're building an ecosystem of support through: The 10 Million Hearts Campaign - Uganda's first youth-led philanthropic movement, Collaborations with schools integrating arts-based health education, Corporate partnerships funding community art installations, Government alliances scaling our proven models nationally.

## Why Our Model Works

In just two years, we've Directly engaged 1,200+ youth through transformative programs, Created 8 permanent public art installations serving as ongoing education tools.

Our success proves that when you combine art with activism, education with expression, and policy with creativity, you create change that sticks.

## Join the Movement

This is more than a program, it's a revolution in how Uganda addresses youth health. Support our work by: Contributing to our **10 Million Hearts, I Cause Campaign**, Hosting an Elpis workshop in your community, Sharing our youth-created content and Volunteering your skills.

Together, we're painting a healthier future for Uganda, one brushstroke, one story, one young person at a time. The canvas is waiting. Will you join us?

## **Vision Statement:**

A Uganda where every young person thrives in good health, free from stigma, with equal access to opportunities for growth and self-expression.

## **Mission Statement:**

To empower Ugandan youth through innovative, arts-based solutions that address HIV/AIDS, mental health, and gender equality, fostering awareness, breaking barriers, and building resilient communities.

## **5 Core Objectives:**

### **1. Combat Stigma Through Creative Advocacy.**

Use art (music, film, poetry, and visual arts) to challenge misconceptions around HIV/AIDS and mental health, influencing policy and societal attitudes.

### **2. Expand Access to Youth-Friendly Health Education.**

Deliver interactive, arts-driven workshops and digital campaigns to educate 5,000+ youth annually on sexual reproductive health, mental wellness, and HIV prevention.

### **3. Strengthen Local Ownership & Funding.**

Grow the 10 Million Hearts, I Cause Campaign to mobilize Ugandans, especially youth to sustainably fund homegrown solutions, reducing reliance on foreign aid.

### **4. Build Safe Spaces for Youth Expression & Healing.**

- Establish community art hubs in all six operational regions (Kampala, Gulu, Kotido, Luuka, Arua, Mbarara) where young people access support, creativity, and peer networks.

### **5. Amplify Youth Voices in National Health Dialogues.**

Train and platform 500+ young advocates by 2030 to lead campaigns, influence policy, and shape inclusive health programs.

## **Why This Matters:**

Aligned with our proven model, these objectives leverage art as a tool for education, activism, and healing, ensuring Uganda's youth are not just heard, but empowered to lead change.

Let's create a future where no young Ugandan suffers in silence.

## **5 Key Strategies to Achieve Our Objectives.**

### **1. Arts-Based Health Education.**

**Approach:** Develop and scale creative workshops, performances, and digital content (films, podcasts, murals) to make health education engaging and relatable for youth.

#### **Action Steps:**

- Train 50+ young artists as peer educators annually.
- Produce 2 short films/year tackling stigma.
- Host quarterly **"Spoken Word for Health"** competitions. (Poetry Competition)

### **2. Community-Led Fundraising.**

**Approach:** Strengthen local ownership through the 10 Million Hearts, 1 Cause Campaign, mobilizing Ugandans to fund youth health initiatives.

#### **Action Steps:**

- Recruit 200,000 new youth donors by 2027
- Launch a mobile giving platform for small donations and integrate Mobile donations.
- Partner with Ugandan businesses and organizations for matched funding

### **3. Youth Advocacy Networks.**

**Approach:** Build a national movement of young leaders who influence policies and programs.

#### **Action Steps:**

- Establish youth councils in all 6 operational regions
- Conduct annual "Youth Health Summits" with policymakers
- Create a digital advocacy toolkit for grassroots campaigns

## **4. Safe Space Expansion.**

**Approach:** Transform schools and community centers into hubs for creative expression and health support.

**Action Steps:**

- Equip 10 new art hubs with resources by 2027.
- Train teachers/staff in arts-based counseling
- Curate traveling exhibitions of youth artwork

## **5. Strategic Partnerships.**

**Approach:** Collaborate with government, NGOs, and artists to amplify impact.

**Action Steps:**

- Formalize partnerships with 3+ ministries (Health, Education, Gender)
- Co-design programs with youth-led organizations.
- Host an annual East African Arts for Health forum. (2030)

## **Why These Work:**

These strategies leverage Elpis Initiative Uganda's core strengths, artistic innovation, youth leadership, and community ownership to create scalable, sustainable change. Each aligns directly with our objectives while staying true to our mission.

**Impact:** By 2030, we aim to reach 20% of Ugandan youth (ages 15-24) with our programs ensuring health knowledge isn't just delivered, but experienced through art.