

## **AWAKEN THE YOUTH UGANDA (AYU)**

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### **AWAKEN THE YOUTH UGANDA TEAM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

#### **Aim**

The sole goal of this organization is to empower the Ugandan youth in order to exploit this demographic dividend in the social, economical, and political development of this nation. With the rates of drug abuse and morbidity in Uganda getting threateningly high, poverty levels and unemployment getting alarming, our major aim is turning them into tomorrow's educators and innovators, entrepreneurs and investors, health professionals and scientists, politicians and peace makers.

#### **Problem**

On October 31 2011, the world population reached seven billion. Half of this population is under the age of 30, and 1.7 billion are aged 10-24, making this the largest generation in human history. Young people make up an especially large share of the population in developing countries, often the largest share. Uganda has the youngest age structure in the world, with 77% of its population under age 30. There are 7,310,386 youth from the ages of 15-24 living in Uganda. Weak governance and poor socioeconomic development has turned this demographic opportunity into a challenge. The youth therefore instead of becoming an economic asset have become a potential factor of instability. Between 1970 and 2000, 80% of all new civil conflicts occurred in countries with at least 60% of the population younger than the age 30 with the uprisings being started and mobilized by people within this age set. The likelihood of experiencing conflict is highest among countries with very young age structures where up to 77% of the population is younger than age 30. Between 2000 and 2007, two thirds of all the new outbreaks of civil conflict occurred in countries with very young age structures for example CAR, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Haiti, Mali and Nigeria. The unemployment rate for young people in Uganda ages 15-24 is 83%. This rate is even higher for those who have formal degrees and

live in the urban area. Uganda's fertility rate has been the highest in the world for 40 years. If it stays constant at the current rate of 6.7 children per woman, the population would quadruple by 2045.

Among the 10 biggest alcohol drinking countries in Africa, Uganda is only second to Nigeria with a consumption rate of 11.93 liters of alcohol per person on average each year. The generic term for domestically distilled beverages in Uganda is the famous Ugandan Waragi, which contains 42% of alcohol making it one of the most alcoholic spirits in the world. If not for the respect of statistics and the Nigerian population, Uganda would have easily become the drunkest nation in Africa by a million miles. The youth population is the most affected by this. Rural urban migration is on the rise with most of the most able bodied men and women (youth) deciding to vacate villages for towns like Kampala, Fort portal, Jinja, and others top look for jobs. This has reduced the production capacity of Uganda and has led to increased crime rate. Among other problems is poor housing (since most of them cannot afford rental payments) and congestion.

Uganda has moved from being a "transit route" for drugs from Afghanistan, Indonesia, Pakistan, west and South Africa to a "significant drug using country." Most culprits involved with drugs are "youth". Drug users tend to be 10-60 years of age. Opiates users tend to be 25-55 years of age, cannabis users 10-45 years of age and sedative users 20-60 years of age. The use of volatile solvents is most common among the youth, around 10-25 years of age. The drug users, mainly the youth continue to experience multiple problems in Uganda and they include; housing and homelessness, low levels of educational attainment, stigma and discrimination, criminalization:- police harassment, abuse, torture, and assault. Sometimes they are forced into detention or imprisonment without detention or trial due to drug possession and consumption or released after paying a huge sum of money for securing a police bond or court bail or forced into rehabilitation centers such as Butabika National Referral Hospital, Serenity Rehabilitation Centre and Nagulu teenage centre. Drug users in Uganda also experience mental and physical health problems and among them: high rates of Hepatitis B and C, HIV/AIDS, TB and physical impairments that can affect their ability to complete everyday tasks, therefore to work. They are seen as "victims of abuse, violence and are perceived as a voiceless community without rights". More problematically, pathologizing and criminalizing drug users results in coercive and heavy-handed interventions which might exacerbate rather than ameliorate any problems that might exist. We have so far failed to incorporate international best practices such as "Harm Reduction", this has caused irreparable harms to particular communities especially the drug users and has served by further stigmatizing and alienating them from public health services and care.

Uganda is among the top 30 poorest countries sealing its position as the 21<sup>st</sup> poorest country in the world. The association between poverty and communicable disease is evident from a cursory exercise in cartography. The maps of those living on less than two dollars a day and the epidemiology of HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB, and many other infectious diseases coincide nearly exactly. Countries with higher incomes per capita tend to enjoy longer life expectancies. Poverty

is arguably the greatest risk factor for acquiring and succumbing to disease worldwide, yet historically received less attention from the medical community than genetic or environmental risk factors. Several factors made the tide in public health and medicine to shift. The greatest being the global HIV/AIDS crisis which brought into sharp relief the vulnerability of financially-strapped health systems to epidemic disease and revealed disparities in health outcomes along economic fault lines. With the increased rates of HIV/AIDS spread, increased orphanage, single parenting has resulted. As a result, the life expectancy has reduced to 58.3% years and 60.14% years for men and women respectively giving an average of 59.1 years according to World Health Organization Report 2013

The research which was conducted by Action Aid International Uganda (AAIU), Uganda National NGO Forum, and Development Research and training (DRT) shows that the unemployed youth are likely to become a source of instability if an intervention is not done early enough. Majority of the youth have no regular work income. 61.6% of the respondents in the study were not in any form of employment, majority of who were in urban centers. The research also shows that 12% of all the youth in Uganda aged between 12-30 years are chronically poor.

## **Methodology**

Uganda, commonly known to the world as the “pearl of Africa” is coincidentally one of the poorest countries in the world. Not only is it known for poverty but for alcohol and drug abuse. It is also known for high cases of morbidity especially diseases like HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB. Despite all these problems affecting the nation, it has the largest youth population in the entire world. This is an asset, if well utilized can alter all this and turn the country into one of the greatest economies in Africa. We plan on mainly focusing on the youth through;

- Changing the mindset of the youth. The Ugandan youth have a job seeking mindset. Most of them have given up on life after having their academic documents get no jobs for them. We plan on doing this through setting up radio and television shows, hosting seminars and conferences in which the youth will be talked to by motivational speakers and successful people within the nation.
- Creating an alternative to formal education by strengthening other personal skills like arts and crafts, music, technology and innovation, agriculture. This will be done through strengthening vocational institutes and crafts centers.
- Creating market, improving job seeking behavior and drawing them closer to business and job opportunities. This will be done through utilizing their addiction to social media by creating an APP mainly for them. With this they will be able to share ideas, market their products and look for better business opportunities.
- Training more youth counselors and working hand in hand with the different rehabilitation centers within the country to ensure that we create a voice for the drug users and ensure their proper recovery from these drug addictions.
- Organizing different competitions in which youth compete for a given grant. This will include competitions like; youth entrepreneur of the year, best youth project of the year and most influential youth of the year.

- Involving the youth themselves in the sensitization programs against diseases like HIV/AIDS and TB. This will be done through organizing different movements and campaigns through the proper usage of social media, televisions and radios. These will be run by the youth themselves to create a bigger impact especially using the youth icons.
- Involving the youth more in the making of national decisions. This will help a great deal in changing the political status of the nation. This will be done through opening up radio and television shows, youth campaigns through their APP and other forms of social media like Whatsapp and Facebook.

### **Impact/prospects of the organization**

This organization will lower the dependency ratios or lead to a lower number of dependents to the total working age populations. Lower dependency ratios can favor higher productivity and economic growth which result to an increase in a country's per capita gross domestic product (GDP), with an aim of influencing education, labor and economic policies.

It will provide a solution to the high rates of unemployment in Uganda today. The youth are entering into a labor market in which informal or part time jobs are the most rapidly growing form of employment, especially since the onset of the 2010 financial crisis. Therefore, the jobs they can find are generally short term with little job security and if any, few benefits.

The organization will reduce on the risk of a serious political, economic, and social challenge to the country and its leadership. It has been suggested that a youth bulge especially one that is made up of many unemployed or idle men may result in social unrest, war or violent extremism.

Youth will better be able to access economic and social opportunities share in economic growth and live healthy lives. They will also be able to contribute to household, community and national well-being.

Youth will fully participate in democratic and development processes, play active roles in peace building and civil society. They will also be less involved in youth gangs, criminal networks, and insurgent operations.

Youth will have a stronger voice in, and will be better served by local and national institutions, with more robust and youth friendly policies.

The rates of alcohol and drug abuse will gradually go down as the two are mainly related to redundancy and frustration.

By empowering the youth, poverty levels will also go down and hence reduce cases of morbidity within the country especially HIV/AIDS and TB spread.

### **ACHIEVEMENT PLAN**

Based on the four intertwined elements of support, protect, prepare and engage, the AWAKEN THE YOUTH UGANDA (AYU) intends to achieve its main objectives mainly by;

- 1) Recognizing that youth participation is vital for effective programs.
- 2) Investing in assets that build youth resilience.
- 3) Accounting for youth differences and commodities.

- 4) Creating second chance opportunities.
- 5) Involving and supporting mentors, families and communities.
- 6) Pursuing gender equality
- 7) Embracing innovation and technology by and the youth.

#### **OBJECTIVE**

**To use this demographic dividend (the youth) in improving the country's political, social and economic welfare mainly through;**

- Improving the capacities and enabling the aspirations of youth so that they can contribute to and benefit from a more stable, democratic, and prosperous community and nation.
- By strengthening youth programming, participation and partnership.
- By doubling efforts in fighting the rate of spread of HIV/AIDS and TB through organizing movements and campaigns.
- By fighting unemployment and creating an alternative to formal education

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Undisputed fact is that 14,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa are being infected daily with HIV and 11000 are dying every day due to HIV/AIDS related illness. 60% of the people in this region live below the UN poverty line of US \$ 1 per day. HIV is an important outcome of poverty, with sexual trade, migration, polygamy, and teenage marriages as its predictors in sub-Saharan Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa is home to 62% of the world's Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) cases, more than 14000 people are daily infected with the HIV, and 11000 people are dying daily due to HIV/AIDS related illnesses. Also, sub-Saharan Africa is home to 70% of the poorest people in the world. This region has the lowest gross domestic product (GDP) in the world, with more than 60% of the population spending less than US \$ 1 a day. Poverty includes deprivation, constrained choices, and unfulfilled capabilities, and refers to interrelated features of well-being that impact upon the standard of living and the quality of life. It is not necessarily confined to financial capital, quantified, and minimized in monetary indices. While financial capital is important, a solely reductionist approach eschews non-monetary resources, the lack which contributes to and sustains poverty. Many youth in Uganda are in such poverty. They lack not only money, but assets and skills. Therefore, they strive to get basic needs and mostly indulge into risky behaviors, such as commercial sex, which can bring basic survival resources. It is not simply that information, education, and counseling activities are unlikely to reach them, but that such messages are often irrelevant and inoperable given the reality of their lives. Even if they understand what they are being urged to do, it is rarely the case that they have either the incentive or the resources to adopt the recommended behaviors. Different research findings have also showed that the consequences of poverty have mostly been associated with migration, sexual trade, polygamy and teenage marriages. All these variables are directly related to HIV/AIDS.

Unemployment heightens a person's likelihood to binge drink, smoke, or have a drug addiction. This unfortunately creates a vicious cycle where the stress of unemployment makes it harder to stay clean, but the drugs make it hard to find and hold down full time work. In the United States, 18.1% of unemployed adults use illicit drugs- that's more than double the percentage of users who are employed full time. Therefore, states with higher unemployment rates tend to have higher rates of drug abuse. According to research made in the United States, it is impossible to break the cycle of substance abuse and unemployment feeding into one another unless it's attacked at both ends. In addition to providing education, resources, and treatment to those recovering from an addiction, opportunities must be created for the unemployed to escape poverty and return to work. Therefore, the tremendous stress, rejection, fear and frequent bouts of depression that often result from being unemployed are high risk factors for the development of a drug use problem. Many youth in Uganda are struggling with the negative effects of unemployment and have resorted to alcohol or drugs to mitigate the discomfort and sense of helplessness they feel.

Redundancy is one of the most stressful events that a person can experience in their life. Its there next to death, divorce, moving house, illness, according to *Anne Marrie* (Counseling & psychotherapy). Redundancy was rated the more stressful than divorce or moving house by a survey of British workers. It most times results to gambling or others sorts of addictions.

"A large proportion of young adults and a rapid rate of growth in the working- age population tend to exacerbate unemployment, prolong dependency on parents, diminish self-esteem and fuel frustrations," writes Richard P.Cincotta, a consultant to the National Intelligence Council's Long Range Analyst Unit. While this kind of frustration and competition for jobs do not directly fuel violence, they increase the likelihood these unemployed youths will seek social and economic advancement by alternative, extralegal means. Because young people have fewer responsibilities, like families or careers, it makes them more prone to taking up arms by joining armed forces or terrorist groups. According to PAI report, 80% of civil conflicts occurred in countries where 60% of the population or more were under the age of thirty between 1970 and 1999. Demographers are quick to stress that youth bulges do not solely explain these civil conflicts-corruption, ethno-religious tensions, poverty, and poor political institutions also play contributing roles-but nor do they rule out as coincidence the predilection toward social unrest among states with large youth populations. In eighteenth -century France, a spike in population boosted demand for food, which in turn drove up inflation, reduced the purchasing power of most citizens, and sparked social unrest. To some extent, others say World Wars 1 and 11 were due to large amounts of young people (particularly in the Balkans circa 1914). Some even suggest Japan's invasion of china in the 1930s can be partially explained by its large number of youth, while others attribute Marxist insurrections in Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s to the swelling population of the regions unemployed youth (guerilla-related violence quelled as the number of young people diminished). Other factors contributing to youth bulge related violence include; rapid urbanization, heightened expectations among job seekers and environmental stresses.

## EXISTING RESEARCH

With the general aim of putting the youth to use, the governments of Uganda in conjunction with NGOs and initiatives supported by USAID have in recent years come up with programs to engage the youth into productive however there have been challenges that have come up as you will be seeing below. These are the challenges or problems we want to capitalize on to create change in the Ugandan society as you read in the abstract and introduction.

Considering the research made in 2011 the youth had all their issues pivoted around education, work and employment, health and general social life.

Education which has always been the major issue has been partially tackled by the government by setting up Uganda primary education and Uganda secondary education which has provided a free education platform for families that can't afford to pay school fees but this has come with its own challenges like dropout especially the girl child due to early pregnancy, the demotivation due to the fact that most university graduates are unemployed, lack of facilities like classrooms, shortage of teachers, mismanagement of money sent to these schools among others, then for students attending private school have challenges with gradual increase in school fees. According to statistics in the National Youth Policy, 63% of inmates in prisons across the country are youth; 67.8% of the youth are able to read, write and communicate this alone has deprived the youth of opportunities that rotate around academic qualifications.

The rising population has been a silent root of all the unemployment, reports reveal that in 2002, youth unemployment was estimated to be at approximately 23% and has today skyrocketed to 32.2%. The revised national youth policy (2011-2016) circulated in September 2011 emphasizes employment through youth led enterprise development, it calls on state and private sector to play greater roles in creating internship and job opportunities for youth. The National Youth policy recognizes that the major causes of a high youth unemployment rate are lack of employable skills, lack of access to resources like land and capital, lack of focus by the existing programs on the informal sector and agriculture, overemphasis on experience, lack of apprenticeship schemes, negative attitudes by the youth towards work especially in agriculture, lack of a comprehensive employment policy and negative cultural attitudes such as gender discrimination et cetera.

Generally, the high youth unemployment rate in Uganda and Africa at large can be attributed to the slow economic growth and small formal labor markets, high population growth rate, lack of sufficient experience and skills, lack of decent work, the rigid education system, rural-urban migration, limited social networks, youth's limited access to capital support systems et cetera.

A number of analysts believe that the poor Government policies are partly to blame for these youth problems. In recent times the Government has come up with a number of solutions to youth problems and these are embedded in policies such as the National Youth Policy, Employment policy et cetera.

The poor attitude towards certain jobs that both young people in employment and unemployed ones exhibit is also partly responsible for the youth problems.

Another cause of the high unemployment rate in Uganda is the societal and cultural aspect that generally encourages young people, particularly the girl child to continue depending on parental support even at an old age. The end result is that many of Uganda's youth do not have the capacity to think for themselves or let alone find creative ways of earning a living. The Youth Job's Bill 2010 that was presented to the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament was supposed to provide jobs regulate employment and change the education system but little or no change has been observed and this is what we need to change.

The major concern with health is HIV and sexually transmitted infection. The population has a high number of sexually active youth that have showed a desire to know the prevention of these diseases. The government has created initiatives like straight talk foundation to try and curb these issues through mass media and open counseling from stake holders. The DHS (Demographic and Health Survey) shows that 62% of young women and men engage in sex before 18 years of age, 47% of the HIV/AIDS cases in the country are among the youth, while there is a 43% teenage pregnancy rate in the country. Through the ministry of health and organizations like TASO, awareness has been created but the youth mostly upcountry have showed little or no improvement through negligence, having traditional beliefs and having a high illiteracy rate. This has been done through health outreaches, provision of free ARVs, counseling, providing free condoms at health centers but all this is not satisfying and more has to be done to curb the vice.

Lastly, I will talk about the youth involvement in the country's politics a major platform in which all the above issues can be corrected if there is good governance. The 2005 National Youth Manifesto was a landmark effort that articulated the platform of action for young people. It was considered a ground breaker towards meaningful engagement in the democratization processes. It was launched prior to the general elections under the stewardship of the Uganda Youth Network. The defunct nature of the NYC created a need for the Youth to reorganize themselves which they did-through civil society that time around. Uganda Youth Network organized regional consultative dialogues with Young people from four districts across the country on what Young people would like to see from their leaders after the 2006 general elections. Youth were also consulted through radio talk shows and Newspaper advertisements calling for submissions from young People.

The Issues highlighted were; youth representation and participation in decision making, including within political parties, the issues of poor quality education, youth unemployment and wealth creation, health, peace and conflict resolution, gender and PWDs, morality and ethics, as well as youth enterprise and innovation. The idea was to front a common Youth agenda, a basis upon which youth would hold leaders and the government accountable.

The achievements of the 2005 Youth Manifesto included the fact that it represented a milestone in itself - never before had youth from political parties, civil society and academia come together to front a common youth agenda, many of the issues of which were taken up by various political parties. It also created a platform for continued engagement between Political leaders and young people, a platform



that the 2010 youth manifesto process drew. The challenges included: the difficulty in sustaining the momentum and youth demands after the elections, secondly the scope of the Consultations were restricted to a few areas because of limited resources which also undermined sustained mass mobilization around the issues in the Manifesto difficult, the Low levels of civic literacy and thus agency among the youth meant that young people did not understand the dynamics of multiparty politics and plan for future engagement in the given context. Today many political youth movements are up and running i.e. NRM youth movement, the Mbabazi youth movement that have created awareness among the youth that their voices need to be heard even though they face issues of lack of money, police brutality and other issues.

## **SELECTION CRITERIA**

### **Inclusion criteria**

The youth (15-35 years) of Uganda irrespective of religious affiliation, ethnicity, education levels, political party and gender.

### **Exclusion criteria**

People who are above or below this age bracket (15-35 years).

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