



NAVIGATING CHALLENGES. CHARTING HOPE.

A Cross-Sector Situational Analysis on Youth in Uganda

Executive Version



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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FOREWORD

It is vital that we engage today's youth in designing and implementing effective and sustainable programs, so that we can gain a deeper understanding of the conditions they are facing and ensure that the programs we develop are relevant to their needs. For the past twenty years, the International Youth Foundation (IYF) has pioneered an approach that not only identifies young people's needs and opportunities in a particular community, country, or region of the world, but also actively engages local youth in identifying those challenges and charting their own futures. *YouthMap* is a four-year USAID-supported initiative that offers IYF and our local partners the chance to apply that comprehensive approach in Sub-Saharan Africa.

With 60 to 70 percent of Africa's population under the age of 30, it is of critical importance that we learn how to tap into the vast resources that these young people can offer. Africa's youth have the ability and the capacity to drive positive social change and economic growth — when given the appropriate resources and opportunities. The magnitude of this younger generation and their nations' current challenges simply demand that youth themselves take a leading role in shaping their futures.

Through the *YouthMap* initiative, IYF goes directly to African youth and the organizations serving them to learn first-hand how young people in each of the target countries live, work, and learn. We ask youth to describe their daily lives, their challenges, and their aspirations and dreams for the future. We then place their answers in the context of data available from our many partners in the region, highlighting the gaps between young people's needs and available resources. In short, we help identify the terrain and erect signposts for the road ahead, with an emphasis on engaging youth in the process. Indeed, we see young people not just as a focus group, but as protagonists in their own development, as well as the development of their nations.

Navigating Challenges. Charting Hope. A Cross-Sector Situational Analysis on Youth in Uganda maps existing youth-related conditions and opportunities across the country. This is the second of up to eight countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to be studied as part of this initiative. We believe this report, with vital input from Ugandan youth, lays a realistic foundation for building a more stable, prosperous, and hopeful future for Uganda and its young people.

William S. Reese

President and CEO
International Youth Foundation

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The International Youth Foundation would first like to thank our partner organizations FHI 360 and the Centre for Basic Research (CBR) in Kampala, Uganda for their collaboration in conducting this situational analysis of Ugandan youth. FHI 360 contributed to the development of the research design and led the research, analysis, and writing on the topics of healthy lifestyles and family formation. CBR contributed to the research design, coordinated the assessment team's field work across the country, and participated in the field work, analysis, and writing on the topics of education, employment, citizenship, and youth at risk. We are very grateful for our partnership with FHI 360 and CBR, which contributed significantly to the research and findings presented here.

This report owes a deep debt of gratitude to the young people across Uganda who participated in focus group discussions and generously shared their time, perspectives, and ideas. We are very grateful as well to the many representatives of government ministries and agencies, donor agencies, civil society organizations, and private sector firms who participated in key informant interviews for this study and who assisted the assessment team in identifying and mobilizing youth participants for focus groups. Our understanding of the circumstances, assets, and challenges of Ugandan youth was greatly enhanced by their insights, which are presented throughout this report. We also extend our appreciation to Commissioner Kyateka F. Mondo at the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) for his strong support and guidance.

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IYF wishes to thank USAID for its vision of empowering Uganda's youth and its belief in the ability of young people to contribute positively to their communities and their country. Special thanks are due to AOTR Joe Kitts in USAID/ Washington as well as our main counterparts at USAID/Uganda: Mission Director David Eckerson, Deputy Mission Director John Mark Winfield, Jeremiah Carew, Natasha DeMarcken, Jessica Ilomu, Juno Lawrence Jaffer, Allyson Phelps, and Barry Wojega. We are also grateful to all of the USAID/Uganda colleagues who provided valuable information and guidance over the course of the assessment process, including Sudi Bamulesewa, Jeanne Briggs, Andrew Colburn, Lee Forsythe, David Mutazindwa, May Mwaka, Andrew Namonyo, Ambrose Olaa, Megan Rhodes, Michael Ronning, Teresa Tuano, and Jacqueline Wakhweya.

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The Executive Version of *Navigating Challenges. Charting Hope. A Cross-Sector Situational Analysis on Youth in Uganda*, presented here, was written by Lin Lin Aung and Susan Glenn. We are grateful for their talents in developing this shorter and more accessible version of the full report, which will be used for wider circulation.

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ABOUT YOUTHMAP

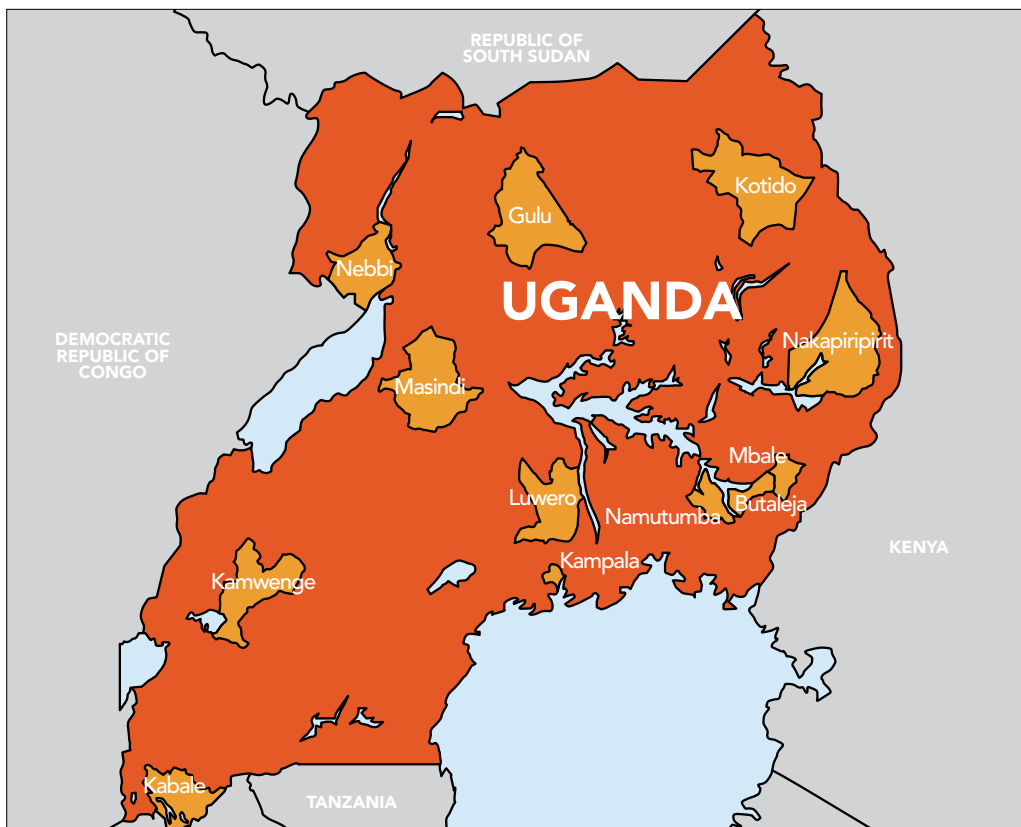
With 28 percent of its population ranging from 12 to 24 years old, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is the most youthful region in the world. The challenges and opportunities facing these young people vary widely by country, gender, age, educational level, ethnicity, and health status. Targeted, effective youth programming requires a nuanced understanding of how youth in each country live, work, and strive — an understanding informed by how youth themselves perceive their present conditions and future prospects.

YouthMap, a program of the International Youth Foundation (IYF), is a USAID-supported, four-year initiative designed to assess youth circumstances and support promising youth development programs and practices in up to eight countries in SSA. Building on the theoretical framework introduced in the *World Bank's 2007 World Development Report: Development and the Next Generation*, these holistic assessments focus on transitions from adolescence to adulthood in the areas of education, work, health, family formation, and citizenship. Each assessment includes research questions tailored to specific youth circumstances and concerns in each country as well as a set of common research questions to allow cross-country comparisons and learning.

Using an assets-based approach, *YouthMap* seeks out and incorporates the voices of each country's youth. Addressing them as potential and actual “problem-solvers” rather than as “problems to be solved,” *YouthMap* engages youth in assessing their current circumstances and charting their future directions.

Synthesizing youth perspectives, stakeholders' feedback, a review of recent literature and data, and extensive field research, *YouthMap* captures a multi-dimensional picture of youth in each country. *YouthMap* assessment findings may then be used by public, private, and civil society stakeholders to inform evidence-based programs and approaches to help the region's youth become healthy, productive, and engaged citizens.

Figure 1: YouthMap Uganda — Study Locations



In Uganda, young people under the age of 30 constitute 78 percent of the population. With its growing youth population, the country is challenged to meet the education, health, and employment needs of these young people.

NAVIGATING CHALLENGES. CHARTING HOPE.

A Cross-Sector Situational Analysis on Youth in Uganda

Overview

Uganda has the world's youngest population with over 78 percent of its population below the age of 30. With just under eight million youth aged 15-30, the country also has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in SSA. Although Uganda is making strides economically, it faces significant challenges in meeting its young people's needs today and their challenges tomorrow as its population continues to grow at a rate of 3.2 percent annually. To assist the U.S. Government in directing program investments effectively in the face of these challenges, IYF and FHI 360, in partnership with Uganda's CBR, launched *YouthMap Uganda* in April 2011. This holistic, cross-sectoral youth assessment covered urban, rural, and peri-urban areas in twelve districts: **Butaleja, Gulu, Kabale, Kampala, Kamwenge, Kotido, Luwero, Masindi, Mbale, Nakapiripirit, Namutumba, and Nebbi** (see Figure 1).

The assessment focused on USAID/Uganda's priority areas articulated in the Mission's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS): fostering the employability of and economic opportunities for youth, especially related to the Mission's new Feed the Future initiative; assessing and strengthening youth-focused interventions in the area of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) to address Uganda's high population growth; and engaging youth constructively within civil society and the governance and political life of Uganda. Youth, population growth, and the emerging oil sector are considered "game-changing" issues in the CDCS. The assessment addressed key questions identified by USAID:

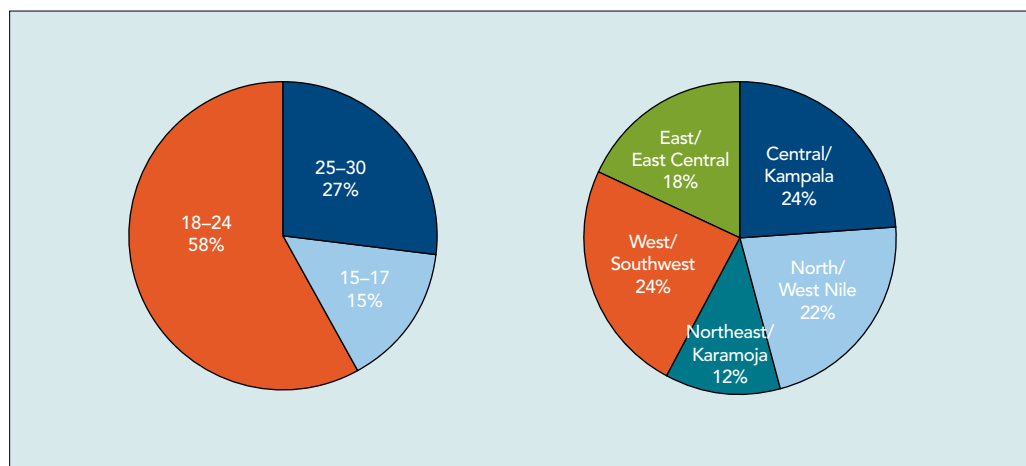
- What are the opportunities, issues, and challenges facing youth in Uganda as they cope with major life transitions?
- Who are the youth populations most at risk in Uganda, and what are their unique needs?
- How effective are existing programs in addressing young people's current needs and maximizing their future potential?

To answer these questions, the *YouthMap* assessment team, including local and international researchers from IYF, FHI 360, and CBR as well as Ugandan youth, undertook the following:

- Conducted **97 focus group discussions** (FGDs) involving a total of **1,062 young people**.
- Interviewed **182 key stakeholders** from public, private, civil society, and donor organizations.
- Assessed **18 health facilities** for youth-friendly service components.
- Conducted a local market survey to identify needed skills, training, and businesses for youth.
- Examined existing socio-economic data, literature, and policy and program documentation, and conducted a thorough analysis of the Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) 2010 data.

Figure 2: YouthMap Participants by Age and Region

A total of 1,062 young people ages 15-30 participated in FGDs and completed a YouthMap survey. Youth participants were drawn from urban, peri-urban, and rural populations and chosen to represent the major characteristics of Ugandan youth, including cohorts of in-school, out-of-school, employed, unemployed, self-employed, and at-risk youth.



This executive report summarizes the topics outlined above. Complete documentation of the assessment can be found in Volumes 1 and 2 (Main Report and Annexes) of the *YouthMap Uganda* report at www.iyfnet.org/youthmap-uganda

Summary Conclusions

Through field research and dozens of focus group discussions, *YouthMap Uganda* captured the current conditions and future hopes of Ugandan youth. Speaking directly with more than one thousand young people, *YouthMap* found the nation's youth brimming with potential but frustrated by roadblocks between that potential and limited resources and opportunities. In presenting the summary conclusions below and more detailed conclusions in the sections that follow, *YouthMap Uganda* seeks to describe the “terrain” of young people's daily lives, enabling Uganda and its youth to chart their own course and a smoother road ahead.

Education: With the introduction of universal primary and secondary education, Uganda has made significant progress in improving access to education. However, school completion rates remain low, facilities are strained, and the practicality of the curriculum at all levels is questioned by youth and key stakeholders. While formal education is highly respected in Ugandan culture, a paradigm shift is occurring with youth more open and positively inclined towards vocational training than their elders. Facing high poverty and unemployment rates, *YouthMap* participants¹ expressed keen interest in training that would enable them to earn a decent livelihood. Several recent evaluations have demonstrated vocational training programs to have positive economic and social impacts on youth. A growing number of youth recognize the value of vocational training. However, resources and curricula in both formal education and vocational institutions need to be properly aligned with market opportunities to meet their needs.

Employment: Uganda has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in SSA and, with population growing at 3.2 percent annually, employment is expected to remain a challenge in the years ahead. However, Uganda also has assets and emerging industries that offer significant promise for youth employment if properly leveraged, including the agriculture, ecotourism, information and communications technology (ICT), financial, and oil sectors. With 33 percent of working *YouthMap* participants self-employed, Ugandan youth demonstrate an entrepreneurial drive that is in itself a national asset. To maximize both emerging market opportunities and its young people's considerable energy, Uganda will need to address the institutional and cultural barriers that frustrate its young people's ambitions and hamper the country's growth. These barriers include: misalignment of education with labor market needs; lack of access to skills training and enterprise development support; lack of access to land and markets; and nepotism and corruption in the labor market.

Health and Family Formation: Although the Government of Uganda (GOU) and development partners support programs and policies to meet young people's SRH needs, these efforts are largely “outmatched” by Uganda's large, sexually-active youth population. Between low rates of contraceptive use and high rates of high-risk sexual activity, Ugandan youth remain at significant risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, and unwanted pregnancy. With 25 percent of Ugandan women nationally reporting their first sexual encounter was coerced, the issue of gender-based violence (GBV) is of great concern. Interestingly, married youth and those with children are a particularly vulnerable population that has received less attention than other out-of-school youth because they often face limited mobility, reduced access to media, and limited autonomy. *YouthMap* participants were eager for more information about STI/HIV prevention, contraception, and family planning. With the availability of youth-friendly services (YFS) unacceptably low in Uganda at this time and some services considered “unfriendly” by young people themselves, the GOU and its partners need to invest additional resources to make new and existing services more accessible and attractive to youth.

Citizenship and Engagement: With Ugandan youth representing over half of Uganda's registered voters, youth would seem to be a political constituency to be respected and a civic asset to be valued. Yet, as reported by *YouthMap*

¹ “YouthMap participants” are young people who participated in the 97 FGDs conducted as part of the assessment. “Key stakeholders” refer to key informants interviewed from public, private, civil society, and donor organizations.

participants, their numbers do not necessarily translate to either influence or respect. Instead, youth reported feeling marginalized and manipulated by their political leadership; dismissed by their elders; and ill-served by the programs designed to serve them. While the GOU has initiated a number of programs and policies to empower youth in civic life, youth felt thwarted by nepotism and corruption in the execution of those programs. The majority of *YouthMap* participants were cynical about national politics and government programs. Despite this cynicism, 93 percent of *YouthMap* participants were registered to vote and 60 percent were engaged in civic activities. They expressed a desire to participate in politics to make positive change and an enthusiasm for helping their own communities.

Youth at Risk: The millions of youth at risk in Uganda include: orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs); disabled youth; victims of conflict; youth abusing drugs or alcohol; and youth affected by HIV/AIDS. In addition to these, youth in northern Uganda and Karamoja may all be regarded as being at risk due to their exposure to conflict. The demand for services far exceeds supply, exacerbating vulnerability. There are also mismatches between young people's needs and available interventions. In northern Uganda, youth continue to suffer from the psychosocial impact of conflict as well as limited educational and employment opportunities. Youth in Karamoja are deeply concerned about their security given ongoing armed conflicts and food insecurity. Despite disarmament efforts, some youth acknowledged hiding their guns due to lack of sufficient state protection; and guns are often used for cattle raiding and livestock theft. This is a complicated issue and will prove to be difficult to control without addressing the main roots of the conflict. Despite these harsh realities, Karamojong youth remain eager to continue their education, secure gainful employment, and contribute to their communities.

Recurring Themes

Across the subject areas covered by *YouthMap*, certain themes recurred that are worth noting:

Land Rights and Access: Although Uganda has nearly half the arable land in East Africa and agriculture is its largest employment sector, Ugandan law and custom regarding land rights prevent young people from participating fully in this sector. Disabled youth and female youth reported having no land rights or being denied those rights that they do have. Land rights issues contribute both to violence and food insecurity in Uganda and will continue to be lingering issues affecting youth unless addressed.

Gender-Based Inequities and Violence: Recent research and *YouthMap* FGDs indicate that female youth are disproportionately affected by discrimination in land rights, employment and compensation, and access to SRH. More than half of young women in Uganda (56 percent) have experienced physical violence according to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS). While the GOU has affirmed its unequivocal commitment to achieving gender equality, *YouthMap* research suggests more targeted efforts are needed to achieve this goal.

Location-Based Disparities: In addition to the regional disparities noted above in northern Uganda and Karamoja, *YouthMap* noted certain disparities between urban and rural areas with more rural youth living in poverty, having fewer years of schooling, and working significantly less than their urban counterparts (though the youth unemployment rate in Kampala is high).

EDUCATION: HOPES VERSUS CONSTRAINTS

Progress and Challenges

Formal education is highly respected in Ugandan culture, and the GOU has made access to education one of its key priorities. Since introducing universal primary education (UPE) in 1997, the GOU has significantly improved access to primary education. As of 2010, 85-95 percent of villages in three of Uganda's four regions had access to primary schools. The northern region, still recovering from decades of armed conflict, lags behind with just over 50 percent of its villages having primary school access. Although **enrollment** has increased dramatically since 2008, primary school **completion** rates remain relatively low at 47 percent.

Introduced in 2007, universal secondary education/post-primary education and training (USE/UPPET) have not yet achieved the same level of access. Only about 15 percent of villages in the north and slightly over 30 percent in the central region have secondary school access. While USE has helped increase primary to secondary school transition rates, secondary enrollment is still very low. With the low supply of government secondary schools, almost half of secondary students attend private schools.

Access to tertiary education is also still quite low. While the GOU has opened new institutions and increased the number of available scholarships, the majority of students either pays full tuition at public universities or attends private institutions. In sum, the GOU has made significant progress in improving educational access, but more resources and continued effort will be required to achieve truly universal education.

Increased Demand and Changing Needs

The introduction of UPE and USE/UPPET has brought more demographic pressures on Uganda's strained educational resources. A 2011 MoES report states secondary school student-classroom ratios are often much higher than 60:1, the maximum target. Other challenges for USE/UPPET schools include the lack of adequate libraries and laboratories. Beyond these capacity issues, both *YouthMap* participants and key stakeholders questioned the relevance of the secondary school curriculum to labor market needs and characterized the curriculum as more theoretical than practical.

The GOU and its partners have instituted a number of changes to address these issues. Working with partners such as the World Bank and African Development Bank, the GOU is building new secondary schools, as well as libraries and laboratories, to reduce overcrowding. It is also making USE support available to eligible private schools and dividing students into "shifts" to maximize use of facilities. Similarly, addressing curriculum concerns, the National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC) will begin revising the secondary school curriculum in 2012 with implementation planned for 2014. Expected changes include: reducing the number of core subjects; including more practical skills; and adapting the primary school, life skills curriculum for secondary schools. In 2012, the entrepreneurship curriculum recently revised in partnership with the International Labor Organization will be piloted and evaluated in 100 schools.



If one has gone to school and completed, it's easier to get a job compared to those ones who haven't undergone formal schooling. Nowadays people use English in work places, and it is learned through schooling.

— YouthMap participant, Kampala

Top Reasons Not in School (UNHS 2010)

Too expensive — 49%
Completed desired schooling — 11%
Not willing to attend further — 7%
Sickness or calamity in family — 7%
My parents did not want me to — 6%
Poor academic progress — 4%
Pregnancy — 4%
All other — 12%

Uganda's Education Structure

- Uganda's formal education system includes seven years of primary education, four years of ordinary secondary education, two years of advanced secondary education, and tertiary education.
- While UPE covers almost all government primary schools, USE/UPPET does not cover all government schools.
- The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) develops policies for all education levels.

21st Century Job Skills: Vocational and Technical Education



There is little emphasis on practical skills acquisition in the school system, leading to the search for white collar jobs. The syllabus is uniform and does not cater for the economic and cultural specificities of the various regions of the country.

— Private secondary school official



Formal schooling only equips you with knowledge, but you need to mix it with vocational skills training so that you can earn a living faster and in a better way.

— YouthMap participant, Nakapiripirit

Being able to be in a vocational school is an achievement. It is a step to achieving my ambition of being an engineer.

— YouthMap participant, Gulu

Ugandan youth are served by an overlapping, three-tier business, technical and vocational education and training (BTVET) system: craftsman-level training; technician-level training; and graduate engineer-level training at universities. BTVET is provided by 133 public institutions, about 600 private training service providers, and 17 apprenticeship programs. The GOU is now formulating a ten-year BTVET strategic plan to guide the use of resources and implementing a new BTVET policy to create new vocational centers and utilize community polytechnics to provide training and certificates. The MoES is working on the mechanics of a levy on private companies to finance skills training.

With UPPET giving primary school leavers the option to attend vocational training for free at eligible institutions, BTVET enrollment has soared in recent years. However, there is still significant unmet demand due to cost issues. Female BTVET enrollment has also increased, reaching 40 percent of total enrollment.

Several recent evaluations suggest that BTVET programs have had positive economic and social impacts on youth. A randomized evaluation of the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) project showed that participants who received vocational training and enterprise development support experienced positive economic and social impacts, as indicated by improvements in earnings, profits, savings, and living standards and reduction in aggression among young men. However, based on interviews with BTVET institutions, Uganda's BTVET system is hampered by a lack of coordination with the private sector and inadequate resources to provide effectively the training most in demand by the labor market. Training consequently often focuses on low-cost skills training mismatched to current and emerging labor needs.

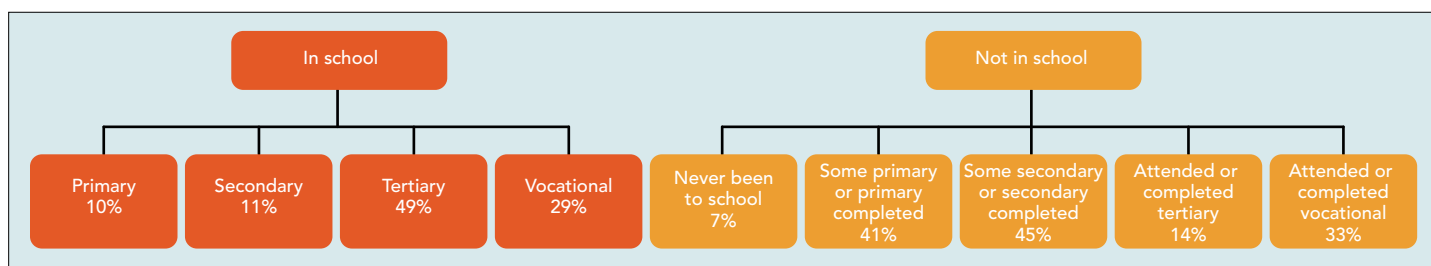
Youth Perspectives: Changing Attitudes

Seven percent of *YouthMap* participants had never been to school and only 14 percent reported receiving some tertiary education. Of those who took a BTVET course, 61 percent reported that they were currently working; 48 percent of those who had not taken a BTVET course were currently working. Figure 3 indicates the level of education in-school *YouthMap* participants were pursuing, as well as the highest level of education achieved for those who were not in school.

Echoing key stakeholders' views, young people also questioned the relevance of formal education across all levels and expressed concerns about the practicality of the formal education curriculum. They felt that even secondary and tertiary school graduates are ill-prepared for the workplace. Even when practical courses, such as agriculture and entrepreneurship, are offered along with traditional academic courses, they tend to be theoretical due to a lack of financial, curricular and human resources. Nationally, only 47 percent of youth complete primary school in Uganda, and 80 percent of its workforce is employed in agriculture. *YouthMap* participants who only completed primary school shared their experience noting that agriculture courses taught at the primary level were simply impractical for preparing them to work in the agriculture sector upon leaving school. While formal education was seen as the best course to follow in general, high unemployment among university graduates (estimated at 36 percent) has led them to question the resources and years invested in formal schooling.

Over 90 percent of both male and female youth expressed an interest in learning a new skill or trade. *YouthMap* participants currently or previously enrolled in BTVET training regarded that training as valuable because it allowed them to acquire practical job skills necessary to go into self-employment. Yet current students reported a lack of adequate training equipment and material and noted that the transition to self-employment was difficult because of the lack of resources such as tools and land. In sum, the realities of the marketplace are driving more youth to consider BTVET as a viable, if not equally respected, option to formal education.

Figure 3: Educational Profile of YouthMap Participants



Key Conclusions

Universal education, high unemployment, and a large and growing youth population together are driving major shifts in Ugandan educational values and expectations. To meet these changing needs and expectations, the GOU and its partners have undertaken a range of initiatives — from curriculum redesign to new school construction. To assist in these efforts, *YouthMap* highlights these conclusions:

- Uganda has achieved great success in increasing access to primary education throughout the country. Due to demographic pressure on the system, primary education quality has suffered, leading to low rates of completion and transition to secondary school.
- Uganda's USE/UPPET has started to provide a chance for all young people to access secondary education and vocational training. However, as universal primary completion improves, the resulting demographic pressure on secondary schools may place the system under challenges similar to those facing primary schools (e.g., strained facilities and compromised instructional quality). Upcoming curriculum reform at the secondary level is an important opportunity to provide practical training and skills relevant to the needs of the mostly informal and agricultural Ugandan economy.
- Access to tertiary institutions is still limited to a small fraction of the population, and an estimated 36 percent of university graduates remain largely unemployed or under-employed as they graduate. Stronger links between the private sector and universities are needed.
- Young people in general wish to complete secondary school and attend tertiary institutions. Given the length of formal schooling and the growing number of unemployed university graduates, youth increasingly recognize the value of vocational skills training.
- BTVET, recently recognized as a crucial component of the education sector, can provide alternatives to the formal education sector. Popular notions that BTVET is second-best to formal education remain prevalent in the country, slowing the necessary transition toward equipping young people with practical skills. Recent evaluations of BTVET programs suggest positive economic and social impacts on youth.

“

I want to receive my bachelor and master degree first and then become a businessman running piggery and poultry projects.

— YouthMap participant, Luwero

EMPLOYMENT AND JOB-READINESS: NEW SKILLS FOR NEW OPPORTUNITIES

“

If you think you will keep looking for jobs, you will never find it. If you create your own, then you can even end up employing other people to work for you.

— YouthMap participant, Gulu

With one of the highest youth unemployment rates in SSA and a growing youth population, Uganda's youth face considerable challenges in securing gainful employment today and in the years ahead. However, with the GOU's anticipated development of more comprehensive youth employment policies, expected growth in several economic sectors, and Uganda's rich natural assets, opportunities are emerging to improve young people's employment prospects. To understand where these opportunities intersect with young people's needs and potential, *YouthMap* analyzed available employment and economic data, interviewed employers and other key stakeholders, conducted a local market survey with local leaders in selected districts, and spoke directly with Ugandan youth about their employment experiences, challenges, and aspirations.

Policy Adjustments and Improvements

According to the World Bank, youth ages 15 to 30 make up 80 percent of Uganda's unemployed. Over 70 percent of youth are not formally employed for wages. The UBOS data shows that the youth unemployment rate for females was 27 percent compared to nine percent for males in 2009, highlighting gender disparity in the labor market.

To address the needs of this large unemployed and underemployed youth population, the GOU has initiated a number of policies and programs in recent years. With nearly half the arable land in East Africa, Uganda identifies agriculture as the mainstay for both skilled and unskilled labor. Its National Employment Plan (NEP) emphasizes employment creation through transforming the sector from subsistence farming to market-oriented agriculture. The National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), a program to increase agricultural productivity, has created new guidelines targeting youth, women, and persons with disabilities (PWDs). The revised National Youth Policy (2011–16) draft, circulated in September 2011, calls for the development of a national youth employment

policy and emphasizes employment creation through youth-led enterprise development. It also calls on the state and private sector to play a greater role in creating internship and job opportunities for youth and protecting them against labor exploitation.

Youth Employment Outlook

Based on key informant interviews and recent research, **the most promising sectors for youth employment include the agriculture, ecotourism, telecommunications, financial, ICT, and oil sectors.** Drivers of economic growth identified by the U.S. Embassy in Uganda include oil, manufacturing, finance, agriculture, and mining.

Agriculture offers promising opportunities for youth in Uganda. About 80 percent of the total population work in agriculture and of those workers, 60 percent are youth. District leaders surveyed reported that the role of youth in the agriculture value chains can be optimized if youth are provided with agriculture inputs (e.g., fertilizer, seeds, or veterinary supplies) coupled with career guidance and enterprise development support. The growing demand for **ecotourism** presents entrepreneurial and employment opportunities for youth, especially in rural areas.

“

There is a real effort by the government and us to ensure that [the oil industry] benefits local people and companies. For the industry to reach the levels we plan in two years, there will be 20,000 jobs created, directly and indirectly. Of those, about 3,000 to 4,000 will be technicians. This includes mechanical (plumbing, welding), electrical, production and instrument technicians. Right now we don't have them.

— Oil company executive, Kampala

The **oil sector** is anticipated to generate jobs, particularly technician and engineer jobs. While direct formal jobs are expected to be limited, growth is expected through the value chain and creation of small businesses serving the industry. Several private sector stakeholders said Ugandan technical training institutions are not prepared to train youth for oil-related jobs or to deliver the quality of graduates that meets industry standards. Those interviewed perceived this to be a major challenge and expressed a willingness to invest in skills training for youth. If this barrier is not overcome, Uganda may fail to reap the full benefits of this growing sector as oil companies may seek foreign applicants for high-skilled jobs.

According to private sector stakeholders, the **telecommunications, ICT, NGO, and financial sectors** will generate some opportunities for youth with tertiary education but will likely grow at a slower pace. The **public sector** is no longer the most significant source of recorded wage employment, as stated in NEP, and available jobs are highly competitive and meant mostly for university graduates. Yet, in Karamoja where formal jobs are scarce, the public sector (police, army, and local government offices) has created some employment opportunities for youth.

Employers' Perspectives on Youth

To seize these emerging opportunities and overcome current barriers to employment, there needs to be a clearer understanding of the mismatches between labor market needs and young people's skills. *YouthMap* interviewed 44 employers to understand their perspectives, and overwhelmingly, they confirmed a significant gap between labor market needs and the skills the formal education system teaches. As indicated below, employers have a mixed view of youth, but overall younger workers are recognized as an important driver of sustainable economic growth. **Many companies are enthusiastic about working with development partners to find ways to increase the capacity of their future workforce.**



Youth are fundamental in our ecotourism industry. They just need some more training to get to the level we need.

— Employer in Kabale

Figure 4: Employers' Perspectives

Employers positively characterized youth as ...	but also noted youth ...
- More productive and flexible than adults - Less expensive to hire compared to adults - Ambitious, motivated, energetic, and creative - Capable of quality work with enough guidance - Less prone to corruption - Willing to give back to community	- Lack technical skills and work experience - Lack soft skills (incl. financial management) - Demand higher salaries, are highly mobile and not always committed or responsible - Are undisciplined, stubborn, and provocative - Are prone to alcohol and drug abuse

Aspirations and Barriers: Youth Perspectives

Among *YouthMap* participants, only 43 percent were working at the time of this study — 60 percent of young men and 53 percent of young women. Among these working youth, only 18 percent were in the formal sector. Among the youth not currently working, 70 percent were actively seeking work, with higher percentages among older youth cohorts. Among *YouthMap* participants, youth unemployment rates were highest in the eastern and central regions, as well as in Kampala (see Figures 5-6).

Figure 5: Employment Status of YouthMap Participants

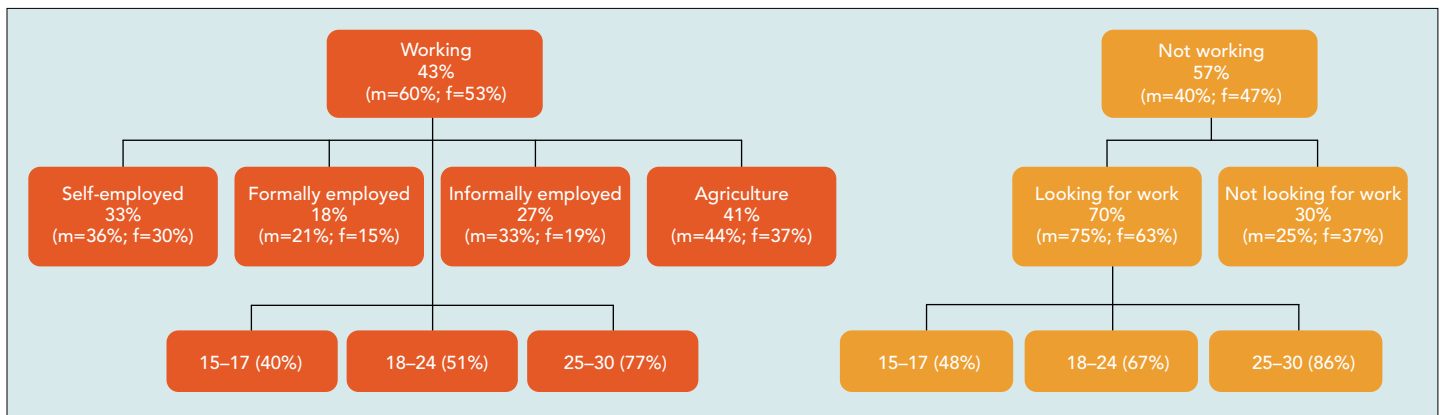
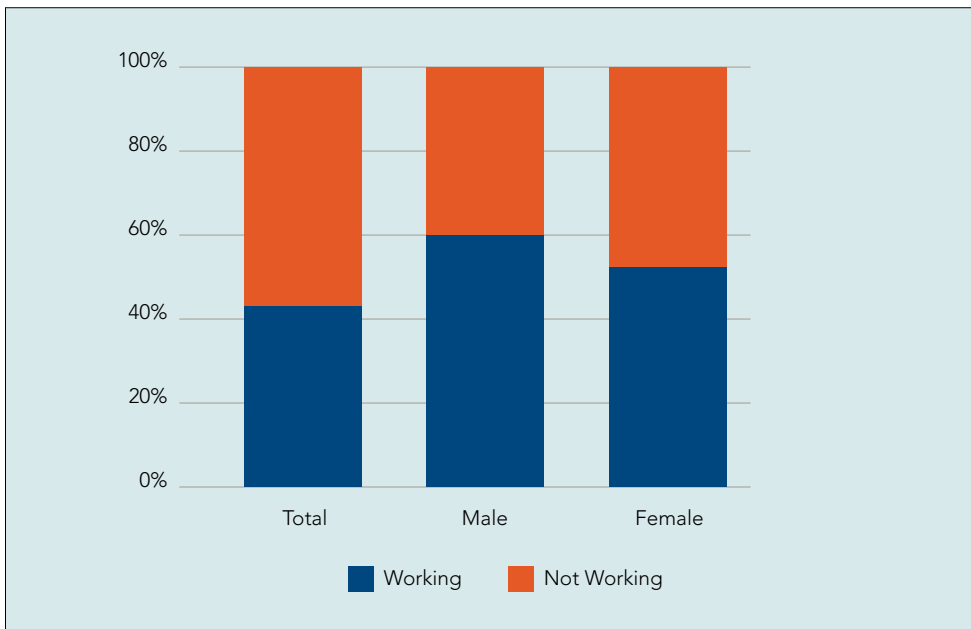


Figure 6: Employment Status of YouthMap Participants by Gender



Constrained by a lack of marketable skills and formal sector jobs, most youth were engaged in informal or seasonal work. When asked about how youth make money, *YouthMap* participants described themselves and their peers working in the occupations shown in Figure 7 below. Some youth acknowledged engaging in illegal activities to earn a livelihood.

YouthMap participants said their primary goal is to secure gainful employment to support themselves and their families. However, they cited a number of barriers including:

- lack of information about jobs;
- lax labor laws allowing employers to dismiss employees without reason;
- lack of policy incentives for the private sector to recruit and train youth;
- limited educational and employment opportunities due to poverty;
- inability of youth to afford basic necessities such as clothing for work; and
- the impact of alcohol abuse on maintaining employment.

Figure 7: Commonly Cited Occupations of YouthMap Participants

Formal	Informal	Agriculture	Illegal
Ecotourism/hospitality (tour guides, interpreters) Entry-level jobs with agriculture-focused companies Telecommunications (sales, technicians) Banking (bank tellers) NGO jobs (community mobilizers, assistants)	Boda boda (motorcycle taxi) drivers Casual laborers, construction workers Domestic workers, security personnel Petty traders, micro-business owners Political campaigners, mobilizers or polling assistants Brokers (for land and other sales) Brewing/selling alcohol (especially young women)	Horticulture Crop farmers Sugar cane cutters or growers Poultry Piggery Livestock farming and trading	Prostitution Gambling Brewing/selling alcohol (if under 18) Selling drugs Commercial livestock raiding Organized criminal activities

In addition to these barriers, youth expressed frustration at employment conditions that included: sexual harassment, low and unfair compensation, and employers' demands for bribes or a percentage of salary in return for a job.

As noted previously, youth desired more career guidance and systematic support with internship and job placement — services not provided by most educational institutions. While internships are a primary avenue for acquiring practical skills and experience, youth felt internships simply exploited “free labor.”

“
Even though we are farmers, we do not have enough to eat after we sell our produce. We live on one meal a day.
 — Young farmer in Luwero

While small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are recognized as an engine of growth to create jobs, youth reported not having access to entrepreneurship training and support services. With 33 percent of working youth self-employed, **YouthMap participants demonstrated a keen interest in entrepreneurship and enterprise development**, with many already involved in petty trading, small manufacturing, or agriculture-related work. However, youth expressed frustration at: lack of access to land and markets; limited access to finance due to lack of collateral; lack of enabling environment (skills training, role models, and social safety networks); high taxation and lack of youth-friendly policies to promote youth-led enterprise development; excessive bureaucratic procedures and expenses associated with formal registration; and electricity power outages that reduce productivity across Uganda.

Despite popular perceptions that youth are not interested in agriculture, **many youth expressed strong interest in agriculture**. In fact, 41 percent are already engaging in agriculture-related work, such as crop farming and management, horticulture, agro-processing, and animal farming and management. **In northern Uganda and Karamoja, the primary economic activity for youth has been and will continue to be agriculture and herding**. Young people already engaging in agriculture described these barriers:

- Lack of access to land generally and, for women, access further inhibited by cultural norms.
- Insufficient agriculture inputs, capital, technology, modern farming techniques, and business skills.
- Lack of transportation, forcing farmers to sell their produce to middlemen at below market prices.
- Restrictive selection criteria for government programs such as NAADS and insufficient information about those programs.

Comparing employers' and young people's perceptions, it is interesting to note that both recognize the significant impact of alcohol abuse on youth employability. While employers characterized youth as less prone to corruption, youth complained about the corruption they encounter in seeking employment and in the workplace. Where youth realize they lack the "hard" skills employers require, they may be less aware they also lack the "soft" skills employers value.

Key Conclusions

Though the GOU and its partners have implemented a number of strategies to boost youth employment, the high national unemployment rate coupled with the high rate of population growth suggest youth employment will continue to be a challenge in the years ahead. To help bridge the gap between emerging opportunities and young people's skills, *YouthMap* highlights these key conclusions:

- Sectors that appear promising for youth employment include the agriculture, ecotourism, telecommunications, ICT, financial, and oil sectors. Stakeholders confirmed that labor market needs and young people's skills are poorly aligned. Largely unprepared for the limited number of jobs available, youth need greater access to high quality, relevant, and practical skills training.
- Constrained by the lack of marketable skills and formal sector jobs, most youth said they engaged in informal sector work or agriculture-related work. They regarded unemployment as their most pressing challenge as many were idle, unemployed, or underemployed. Youth reported facing major challenges in securing formal employment. Young women reported facing even greater constraints due to cultural norms and gender stereotypes.
- With persistent food insecurity, youth were eager to participate in the agriculture sector. Local market survey results revealed opportunities for youth to provide better access to agriculture inputs for local farmers and work in value chains. Realizing this sector's potential will require continued efforts to overcome barriers to youth employment and entrepreneurship, such as lack of access to land.
- Enterprise development presents a viable option for youth, particularly in agriculture. However, the currently available entrepreneurship programs and support services are negligible compared to the demand for such assistance. To maximize their entrepreneurial capacities, youth require more targeted training, enterprise development support services, and access to finance.
- According to private sector stakeholders interviewed, technical training institutions are not prepared to train youth for oil-related jobs or to deliver the quality of graduates that meets industry standards. Uganda needs to overcome this barrier to reap the full benefits of the oil sector.
- Employers noted the challenge of finding qualified graduates and the need to provide on-the-job training. They are enthusiastic about working with development partners to find ways to increase the capacity of their current and future workforce.

YOUTH, HEALTH AND FAMILY FORMATION

With a large, sexually-active youth population, the stakes for addressing youth health needs in Uganda are high. By age 18, over 62 percent of young women and almost 48 percent of young men have had their first sexual encounter. According to the 2006 Demographic and Health Survey, a significant percentage are engaging in high-risk sexual activity — 26 percent of young women and 74 percent of young men. Despite this high rate of sexual activity, young people's use of contraception and condoms is low. With UNAIDS reporting HIV rates of 4.8 percent for females and 2.3 percent for males (ages 15-24), it is clear these behaviors are placing young people's health and lives at risk.

HIV/AIDS unfortunately is not the only sexually-related risk Ugandan youth face. A quarter of young women reported their first sexual encounters were coerced. Only 50 percent of young women gave birth in a health facility or with the assistance of a skilled provider. Despite the illegality of abortion in Uganda, in a nationally representative survey, 26 percent of females and 22 percent of males (ages 12-19) reported having a close friend who attempted to end a pregnancy. Within this often dangerous environment, Uganda's youth are eager for the information and services needed to lead responsible lives.

Available Resources versus Young People's Needs

In recent years, the GOU has adopted a number of policies to create a supportive policy and legal environment for the promotion of youth health. The National Adolescent Health Policy for Uganda targets youth reproductive health issues including pregnancy, abortion, HIV, STIs, and psychosocial concerns. Its National Policy for HIV Counseling and Testing permits youth ages 12 and up to obtain an HIV test without parental consent and the Uganda National Policy Guidelines and Service Standards for Reproductive Health include a section specifically addressing management of adolescent SRH.

Further encouraging responsible sexual behaviors, the GOU and its partners have launched several initiatives providing youth with critical SRH information. The highly popular Straight Talk Foundation Campaign, for example, is a multi-lingual program advocating delaying sexual activity and/or practicing safe sex and is reported to have reached 99.4 percent of students in secondary schools across six districts. To reach out to youth with SRH information on a broad scale, the GOU and its partners appear to make effective use of the media based on comments from youth and stakeholders. (This outreach is especially important since 57 percent reported receiving health news via the radio.) In addition, since the introduction of UPE in 1997, the Uganda school system has also become a major source of SRH information.

Finally, seeking to provide youth with the SRH and family planning services they need, the GOU uses Level III and IV Health Centers as critical suppliers. (HC IIIs provide general out-patient clinic, a maternity ward, and a functioning laboratory in sub-districts. HC IVs offer the same facilities plus in-patient services and emergency surgery at the county level.) However, these services fall short on the characteristics of truly youth-friendly services.² In 2007, the Ministry of



Well-trained workers plus friendly staff with good teaching or counseling services are the most important things that attract many youth to a given health center.

— YouthMap participant



Young people need to find counselors every time they go to test for HIV because these people give them courage to go for a test, but in other places where there are no counselors, youth sometimes do not go for testing.

— YouthMap participant, Masindi

² Youth-friendly services are characterized by hours and locations accessible to youth, friendliness of the environment, privacy and confidentiality, staff preparedness to interact with youth, availability of peer education/counseling and other education programs, supportive policies and administrative procedures, and affordable fees.

Health found that only five percent of facilities provided YFS. Although health services are generally available, the lack of YFS and inconsistent application of existing national policies on YFS pose serious potential consequences, with youth seeking but failing to gain the information or services they need to stay healthy and safe. Barriers to YFS include: requiring spousal or partner approval for certain services for married youth; and prohibitive costs of services, contraceptives, and transportation. Regional disparities in availability compound risks for northern youth who have fewer hospitals and NGO health units. Despite these barriers, key informants generally felt that youth-friendly **policies** are one of the strengths of Uganda's health system and cited dissemination and implementation of those youth-friendly policies as the challenge. *YouthMap*'s literature review suggests that decentralization of services in Uganda exacerbates that challenge.

Information Access and Behaviors: Youth Perspectives on SRH

One youth explained why the use of drama as a means of transferring SRH information was so successful:

“Because it has an entertainment component and also involves the youth themselves as the characters in the shows.”

Confidential focus group discussions allowed *YouthMap* to elicit the views of Ugandan youth themselves on issues related to SRH and family planning. Youth offered valuable insights into how to design services and deliver information to meet their SRH and family planning needs more effectively.

Pressing Concerns: Regarding transactional sex, both male and female youth viewed sexual relations **without** a transaction of gifts or money negatively. When asked their most significant SRH concern, abortion led the list with youth citing early marriage, dropping out of school, and transactional sex as the causes of unwanted pregnancies. Young people's fear of the consequences of abortion (death, infertility, and stigma) was striking.

Effective Approaches in SRH Education: The majority of *YouthMap* participants mentioned SRH programs best categorized as “edutainment.” Taking a range of related comments together, *YouthMap* FGDs indicate that some of the most effective approaches to SRH education include: radio programs, programs with an emphasis on counseling or entertainment, and communications with knowledgeable, respected elders.

Gaps in SRH Knowledge: Despite a range of seemingly effective programs, young people's SRH knowledge highlighted some surprising gaps and persistent myths. For example, youth cited ineffectiveness and side effects such as infertility, child deformities, and cancer as reasons they did not use contraceptives. Nationally, only 11 percent of sexually active young women use a modern contraceptive method. Youth frequently stated that, since condoms are not 100 percent effective or could burst inside the woman, unprotected sex was preferable. There is some evidence that adults in the community contribute to the myths based on their own lack of knowledge or a desire to scare youth from engaging in sex.

Access to SRH and Family Planning Services: When asked to describe programs available in their communities, *YouthMap* participants described a variety of program types ranging from livelihood programs to help specific populations such as sex workers, to sanitation efforts, to SRH programs with counseling and entertainment components. However, across all FGDs, youth expressed a strong desire for more information about using family planning and preventing pregnancy, HIV, and STIs.

In describing barriers to or gaps in service, *YouthMap* participants cited: the costs of services,³ contraceptives, and transportation; a lack of adequate, youth-friendly staff as well as supplies; concerns about privacy and confidentiality; and a lack of information about the services available.

³ The FHI 360 health facilities assessment indicated that, while health clinics offer reduced fees for clients in need, there were no specific guidelines for determining fee reductions and no clear mechanisms to aid youth unable to afford medical supplies or medications.

About Marriage and Family: *YouthMap* participants expressed very positive views towards marriage and childbearing. Although the majority of youth expressed a desire for three or four children, it seems that if financially able, a larger family was still considered ideal. Youth also described tension between traditional family values and the economic and health situation they face in today's world. Not only did youth feel their parents' generation had more resources to support their families, they also viewed their parents as healthier and less affected by STIs and child malnutrition.

Key Conclusions

Despite concerted efforts by the GOU and its partners, available SRH and health services are generally out-matched by Uganda's large, sexually-active population. As Uganda tries to meet young people's needs for youth-friendly SRH and family planning services, it is useful to consider the existing gaps, proven successes, and emerging opportunities. To assist in these efforts, the *YouthMap* assessment highlights these conclusions:

- Despite existing initiatives, a greater focus on actionable information around family planning is needed. While mass media campaigns and other SRH programs have supported young people's SRH knowledge, they lack detailed information required to make informed health decisions.
- The society in which youth live today presents both opportunities and challenges for further improvement of their SRH. Norms around sex, marriage, and childbearing are shifting, and youth clearly experience tension between the traditional values of their elders and modern values. Desires to reach educational and financial goals before family formation may eventually yield further delays in marriage and childbearing. However, these changes need to be accompanied by a shift in cultural norms that promote greater gender equality.
- Negative gender norms, which place females at higher risk for sexual coercion, early marriage, and pregnancy, will continue to delay the realization of better health outcomes for youth until they are addressed and equalized. Positive role models are needed to reverse growing concerns around sexual coercion and transactional sex.
- Married youth and those with children suffer from an even greater lack of information and services than other populations due to gender and cultural norms. Taking a community-based approach which also targets husbands and communities will be critical in increasing their access to services. Developing group-based interventions outside of the health sector (e.g., literacy classes and livelihood programs) can also provide a venue for transmitting SRH information and services and empowering young women.

Interestingly, married youth and those with children are a particularly vulnerable population that has received less attention than other out-of-school youth because they often face limited mobility, reduced access to media, and limited autonomy. Contrary to general perceptions, their married status does not give these youth greater access to family planning and SRH services. Gender and cultural norms, which decrease female decision-making and promote early marriage and childbearing, further disadvantage these youth who may be most in need and most willing to utilize services.

YOUTH AND CIVIC LIFE: UNREALIZED ASSETS

“

I intend to stand as an LC 5 [local council] candidate in 2016. I hope I will become a political leader.

— YouthMap participant, Kotido

With 7.4 million youth aged 18-30 eligible to vote in the 2011 elections, **Ugandan youth represent over half of the nation's voters.** Engaged in their communities and eager for opportunities, young people have the potential to be a powerful force for progress or disruption in Uganda.

To engage youth as a positive force, the National Youth Policy (NYP) is currently being revised to add youth empowerment and participation in decision-making as one of its new priority areas. The revised draft emphasizes promoting youth cooperation with other groups in society,

instilling in youth a sense of ownership in development efforts, and building their capacity to realize their aspirations. In supporting the African Youth Charter, the GOU also recognizes the importance of youth participation in the political process. While the National Parliament allots five seats for youth Members of Parliament, at least one of whom is female, it is difficult for youth to become involved in politics at the district level due to high nomination fees. Although the National Development Plan does not specifically address young people's civic participation, it states Uganda's core civic values which include: unity in diversity; honesty in civic duties and all endeavors; community responsibility; integrity; and patriotism.

“

I volunteer in the Foundation for Development of Needy Communities because we deal with communities. Right now, we help [them] on how they can save and then lend to each other and do business. Through our work, I have seen change in the community.

— YouthMap participant, Mbale

To provide a comprehensive framework for post-conflict recovery in northern Uganda, the GOU also launched the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan in 2007. The GOU and its development partners focus on visible recovery and development activities. USAID programming has emphasized peace-building activities and mainstreaming peace and reconciliation practices. To note one innovative approach to promote youth participation, UNICEF is conducting FGDs with northern youth to guide the content for a participatory radio drama dealing with peace-building from a youth perspective.

Similarly, there are a number of initiatives that support youth civic engagement and leadership. The International Republican Institute provides mentoring to increase the leadership skills of promising young women in universities across the country. UNICEF's U-report project uses a free SMS platform for social monitoring in order to increase accountability related to service delivery.

“

Politics and development are inseparable; we know it is our right to vote and be voted.

— YouthMap participant, Namutumba

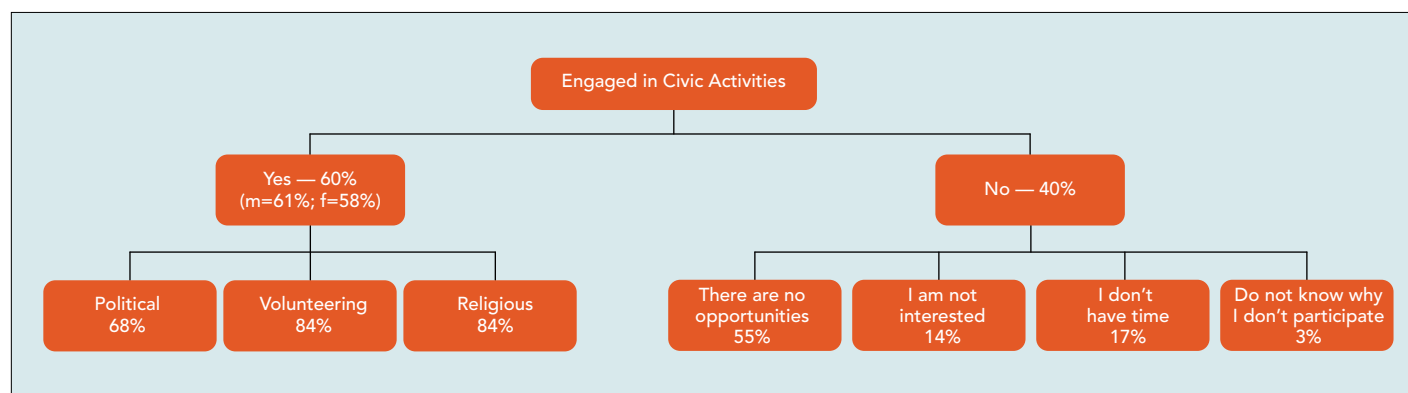
Notably, reference to these programs in FGDs and stakeholder interviews was limited – perhaps reflecting a lack of information on ongoing activities. While local government staff and NGOs could readily identify key actors in civil society locally, few mentioned national-level actors. NGOs interviewed reported their greatest challenges as mobilizing needed funding and ensuring their activities were not politicized.

Engaged but Unempowered: Youth Perspectives

Overall, Ugandan youth are becoming more involved in the country's civic and political processes. YouthMap participants acknowledged an intrinsic desire to assist a neighbor in need. They reported participating in their communities,

including helping the disabled and elderly, involvement in church activities, engagement in health-related sensitization campaigns, and involvement in school clubs, peer counseling and drama/music groups. While clearly poised and eager to take their place in Uganda's political and civic life, many regarded civic engagement as a luxury they could not afford when meeting their own basic daily needs is an ongoing struggle.

Figure 8: Civic Engagement of YouthMap Participants



Regarding **youth political involvement**, many *YouthMap* participants said they saw voting as the main form of participating in politics. The majority of youth indicated that they were registered to vote: 94 percent of young men and 92 percent of young women. Older youth reported even higher rates of registration with 98 percent of youth aged 25-30 registered to vote compared to 91 percent for youth aged 18-24. *YouthMap* participants reported assuming various roles in the political process as: voters, polling assistants, candidates, morale-boosters and security guards for campaigning candidates, leafleteers, and other positions at the school, village, and parish level. Youth who were not involved cited a lack of education and money as fundamental barriers to their participation in the political process. Some youth, however, felt that their votes were not worth much and expressed skepticism about the usefulness of casting one's vote.

The majority of *YouthMap* participants expressed cynicism about national politics and government programs. Among their frustrations, they cited: marginalization and manipulation of youth, corruption and vote-buying, nepotism, bribery, and financial impropriety in government programs. They described being used during election cycles with their concerns subsequently dismissed. They stated that young people's desperation made them easy targets for manipulation by politicians or others intent on using youth to destabilize communities. Stakeholders and youth interviewed acknowledged that youth are both the perpetrators and victims of political violence. One reason frequently cited for youth involvement in violence (particularly among young men) was the lack of livelihood alternatives.

Participants described their exclusion from the planning of government-supported, youth-focused programs and the subsequent shortcomings or failures of those programs. Karamojong youth reported feeling excluded from both local and traditional political systems such as *akiriket* (traditional assembly of elders in Karamoja) where decisions are made.

One young man in Masindi noted there was still a long way to go before youth achieved real participation: “When you have no money, you cannot be voted [for]. To campaign nowadays requires money. I joined politics to improve my welfare. We the youth have the potential to lead but no money at all. We are being labeled as future leaders, but when will the future come? The political leaders are not implementing the programs. Our leaders are talking the talk but not walking the walk.”

“

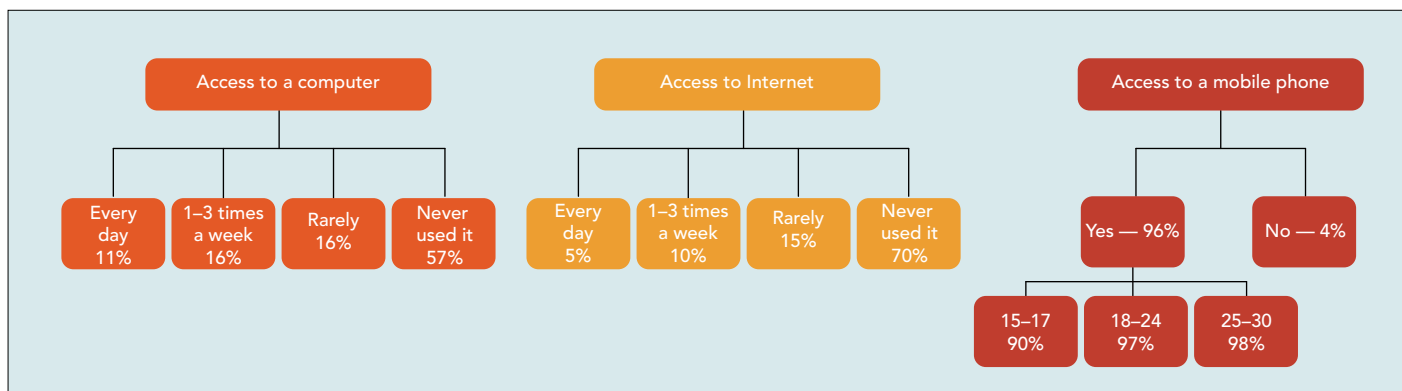
Youth participation in most development activities is at a token level. Participation of the youth should be embedded, right from planning of any activity to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation level. Voices of youth are missing in most development activities, including in youth-specific programs. A lot of money is sunk into youth programs which are not representative of youth voices.

— YouthMap Peer Review Committee Member

Despite these frustrations, youth do participate politically and identified the desire for change as their driving motivation. Many young men and women shared their aspirations to assume political leadership roles in order to help their communities and affect greater change. **Youth clearly recognize the power of politics to transform Uganda, with many citing the importance of voting and some aspiring to become MPs, presidential advisors, and judges.** A recent Mercy Corps study indicates that **youth show enormous potential to contribute to conflict resolution efforts** because they have a good understanding of the motivations and root causes of conflicts such as cattle rustling in Karamoja.

ICT offers many opportunities for young people. Access to mobile phones in particular is widespread. Over 95 percent of youth reported having access to a mobile phone. Access to computers and Internet, however, remains limited outside of Kampala. The majority of youth surveyed reported only rarely or never using a computer or the Internet as shown in Figure 9. Radio remains a main source of news related to educational and employment opportunities for 70 percent of *YouthMap* participants, especially in rural areas, because of limited infrastructure and poverty.

Figure 9: Youth and Access to Technology



Key Conclusions

The GOU, its partners, and youth themselves recognize young people’s potential to transform or disrupt Ugandan society. Though the GOU has implemented policies to empower its youth to play a positive role, the realities of young people’s civic lives do not yet match these policy goals. To help better understand and adjust policies and programs to these realities, *YouthMap* highlights these conclusions:

- *YouthMap* participants reported participating in the political process at the periphery, carrying out predetermined and limited tasks. They demonstrated little sense of being able to work the political system in their favor, yet continue to see political activity as a route to jobs and income.
- Despite feelings of disempowerment and discouragement, the issue of citizenship is of growing importance to

Ugandan youth. They are eager to voice their opinions, engage in decisions that determine their futures, and seek a political process that includes youth as equals.

- Youth expressed frustration with existing government and other development programs. They noted that their participation was fundamental to the success of development programs yet they remained excluded and expressed a desire to go beyond token participation.
- Stakeholders and youth interviewed acknowledged that youth are both the victims and perpetrators of political violence. One reason frequently cited for youth involvement in violence (particularly among young men) was the lack of livelihood alternatives.
- Youth in northern Uganda and Karamoja are characterized by their hope for peace and security and their high levels of energy and resilience. They demonstrate untapped potential to positively contribute to conflict resolution and peace building efforts in their communities.
- New technologies offer opportunities for youth, especially urban youth. However, poverty and basic infrastructure issues prevent average Ugandan youth, particularly in rural areas, from using the Internet and social media to participate in politics or other activities. To increase outreach to youth, mobile phone / SMS technology and radio were felt to be the most appropriate communication tools.

VULNERABLE YOUTH: FUTURES AT RISK



A majority of us have never had a chance of studying simply because of hearing, visual impairments, or mobility problems. Yet those are just physical disabilities — we have very sound brains! So it is the problem of environment. People do not plan well for improving our access to education.

— YouthMap participant, Kamwenge

The national statistics on Uganda's at-risk youth population are daunting. There are an estimated 3.5 million disabled youth and roughly 1.7 million orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs). A significant portion of Uganda's 1.27 million displaced persons are youth, and 73 percent of its prison population is under the age of 30. With the world's highest rate of alcohol abuse and extremely high youth poverty rates,⁴ the consequences for millions of youth are formidable.

In addition to these cohorts of vulnerable youth across the country, youth in northern Uganda and Karamoja remain at risk because of their exposure to conflict and violence. As a result of 23 years of conflict, youth in northern Uganda are the poorest in the country with the lowest rates of education, the lowest levels of access to schools, the lowest rates of wage employment, and one of the lowest rates of skills training. Three quarters of the youth in the northeastern Karamoja region are estimated to be inactive (neither employed nor in school), and they are affected by armed conflict, prolonged drought, famine, limited access to education, and political and socioeconomic isolation from the rest of Uganda.

National and Regional Approaches

Recognizing the magnitude of these challenges nationwide, the GOU has developed a range of policies and programs to assist youth at risk. The MGLSD's Department of Youth and Children Affairs is tasked with promoting and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups. The NYP targets 22 youth groups for special attention including: youth in conflict; disabled youth; orphans; rural youth; females; unemployed youth; and youth affected by HIV/AIDS. It prioritizes assisting OVCs and HIV-affected youth, creating opportunities for PWDs, addressing substance abuse, and rehabilitating juvenile offenders.

Donors and civil society organizations are also attempting to address the needs of youth at risk. The USAID's LEAD project and ACKT program, for example, provide psychosocial and economic support in northern Uganda and conflict resolution support in Karamoja, respectively. The World Bank supports infrastructure rehabilitation in northern Uganda. The Uganda Youth Development Link provides counseling, guidance, and drug and alcohol abuse prevention campaigns for youth, children, and OVCs.

Despite the combined efforts of the GOU and its partners, the gap between the needs of youth at risk and the services available is wide. In some cases, services are not targeted to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) reported, "PWDs did not benefit from government programs such as NAADS and NUSAF because they were regarded as people who cannot satisfy conditions of access. These programs were meant to benefit the active poor, and not the poor or the poorest of the poor where PWDs fell."⁵ According to *YouthMap* participants and NGO stakeholders, at-risk groups such as homosexuals, sex workers, and drug abusers are largely unserved due to legal, cultural, and religious restrictions.

⁴ Across the country, between 54 percent and 66 percent of Uganda's youth live on \$1 or less per day, and 73 percent to 84 percent live on \$2 or less per day according to the UNHS 2010 data.

⁵ While NUSAF did not benefit PWDs, a randomized evaluation showed that its participants who received vocational training and enterprise development support experienced positive economic and social impacts, as indicated by improvements in earnings, profits, savings, and living standards and reduction in aggression among young men.

Though a number of NGOs operate in northern Uganda, few programs specifically target youth. While the entire population still struggles with the trauma and lingering impacts of war, many psychosocial programs have ended and many of those that remain simply do not meet the needs of youth for such support. (Regarding the few programs available, *YouthMap* participants suggested programs should incorporate livelihood components believing that psychosocial support alone is not very effective. Youth stressed that finding employment is the primary concern of young people in the north.) Drawing from *YouthMap* field research, FGDs with youth at risk, and a literature review, Figure 10 below summarizes the prevailing conditions and consequences facing these populations.

Figure 10: Overview of Sources of Vulnerability and Consequences for Youth at Risk

Sources of Vulnerability	Characteristics of Youth at Risk	Consequences
Macro-level: - Poverty, food insecurity - High fertility rate - HIV pandemic - Infrastructure, governance and conflict issues Pressing youth issues: - Un/underemployment - Limited livelihood alternatives - Limited access to land or capital - Inadequate services for youth Community/family-level: - Deteriorating family structures - Easy access to alcohol and drugs - Limited social safety nets - Gender stereotypes/barriers	One or more of these contributing factors leads to: Sense of insecurity (economic, political, and social) felt among youth. OVCs marginalized, unable to find health, education and livelihood support. Disabled youth stigmatized and suffering from lack of specialized support. Youth forced to find survival on streets, impeding their education. Young offenders in prisons unable to get skills, exposed to criminals, unsafe. Young women (single mothers, disabled females) particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.	Lack of safe homes, parental care, career guidance, social safety nets. Casual/seasonal/informal labor, theft, prostitution as livelihood alternatives for survival. Youth exploited and/or faced with dangerous labor conditions. Risky behaviors affect their well-being and exacerbate HIV/AIDS. Substance abuse. Gender-based violence. Juvenile offenders unable to make a living after released, tempted to re-engage in illicit activities for survival.
Karamoja		
Isolated region with infrastructure and local governance issues Armed conflict, insecurity, inadequate state protection Tribal, cross-district/border issues Traditional, pastoral society Scarce resources, drought, and chronic food insecurity leading to cattle rustling and theft Limited service delivery Mixed success of disarmament efforts High bride price, with girls treated as assets for future wealth	Youth are unable to receive education, skills, or services they need, and forced to find other alternatives. Young males are under pressure to demonstrate strength as warriors and find ways to pay high bride price, increasing the likelihood of joining cattle raids or armed conflicts. Youth feel pressured to fend for their own security given high insecurity. Female youth are confined to domestic roles, and at risk of violence associated with cattle raids and armed conflict. Youth have limited entitlements and roles in this traditional society.	Majority are idle and cannot get jobs in or outside Karamoja (also resulting in out-migration). Youth engage in cattle raiding, livestock theft. Unable to participate politically or civically, most youth are frustrated. Keeping guns for protection, youth become both victims and perpetrators of violence/conflict. Young women are subject to rape, violence, HIV/AIDS, and teenage pregnancies, leading to further vulnerabilities.
Northern Uganda		
Lingering impacts of the war on the local economy and people Few programs specifically addressing youth needs and providing relevant skills training and self/employment support services	Youth in the north are the poorest with the worst access to schools and jobs. Youth are deeply affected by poverty and LRA war, particularly female youth, disabled youth, and ex-abductees.	Youth still face psychological impacts of the war. Unable to access education, skills training or jobs, many are caught in the cycle of poverty.

Conditions and Consequences: Speaking Directly with Youth at Risk

To determine first-hand how vulnerable youth view their circumstances and prospects, *YouthMap* conducted 38 focus group discussions with 358 youth at risk including: youth affected by conflict, out-of-school youth, disabled youth, juvenile offenders, HIV-affected youth, and OVCs. Throughout these discussions, youth shared insights into the causes and consequences of their living conditions. Youth readily linked high-risk and illicit behaviors to unemployment, idleness, poverty, and lack of parental guidance. Recurring themes include:

- Cultural stigmatization of these youth cohorts negatively impedes their access to services and basic rights and diminishes political and social will to address their needs.
- Land rights of disadvantaged youth are frequently denied, causing greater food insecurity and violence. Most communities do not recognize the rights of women to land, and most parents do not apportion land to their daughters.
- Family instability and changing social values are placing more youth at risk, making youth more inclined to engage in illicit activities for financial gain or simply to survive.
- Conditions for females across all risk cohorts were compounded by GBV, lack of land rights, denial of education, greater social stigma, and increased risk of exploitation.

Disabled youth reported suffering from stigma, discrimination, physical abuse, neglect from their own families and society, and a lack of educational and government resources. **HIV/AIDS-affected youth** lamented social stigmatization,

high costs of care, and lack of support and services. **Former abductees** of the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda stressed the impact of interrupted educations, lingering psychosocial impacts of the war, and inability to re-assimilate into their communities. In addition, Ugandan youth noted nepotism in access to government programs structured to benefit the "better off" at the expense of the poorest.

Youth in Karamoja were deeply concerned about their security given ongoing armed conflicts. Despite the GOU's ongoing disarmament efforts, some youth acknowledged that they are still hiding their guns because: 1) there is not sufficient state protection, and 2) guns are a key source of livelihood. Armed conflicts linked to ongoing livestock theft and attacks on human targets exacerbate food insecurity. This is a complicated issue and will prove to be difficult to control without addressing the main roots of the conflict, and as long as the youth continue to rely on raiding and livestock theft as a source of income.

The majority of Karamojong youth are frustrated by the lack of jobs and alternative livelihood options. One youth in Nakapiripirit said, "In Karamoja, the few jobs available have been taken over by people who come from other places. We do not have access to the available jobs." Despite these harsh realities, they expressed their desire to have greater access to educational and employment opportunities, like youth elsewhere. One educator in Nakapiripirit said, "When Karamojong youth are given an opportunity to learn, they catch up ably. They are cooperative, social, intelligent and hard-working."

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Some of our community leaders are not doing enough for PWDs. Some of them even despise us.

— YouthMap participant, Nebbi

Many youth interviewed shared their desire for peace.

“I dream of peace and security in Karamoja.”

— YouthMap participant, Nakapiripirit

“I pray for peace to come to Karamoja so that development can prevail.”

— YouthMap participant, Kotido

Key Conclusions

Despite the combined efforts of the GOU, NGOs, and donor organizations, the magnitude of the population of vulnerable youth and their needs overwhelm available resources. To better understand the circumstances and needs of these youth cohorts, these conclusions are highlighted:

- Social stigma, lack of support structures, and a host of external factors contribute to the vulnerability of Uganda's youth. They are deeply affected by HIV/AIDS, high substance abuse, changing family structures, and lack of access to land.
- Youth in Karamoja and northern Uganda face uniquely challenging situations as a result of conflict and violence, insecurity, weak governance structures, environmental and other factors. Young women are especially vulnerable, experiencing psychological and physical hardships as a result of conflict, abuse, and traditional systems that disempower women.
- The demand for services far exceeds supply, exacerbating vulnerability. There are also mismatches between young people's needs and available interventions. There is a need for the GOU to take measures to better support and create enabling environments for youth at risk, in close collaboration with development partners and in consultation with communities.
- Youth linked their risky behavior and engagement in illicit activities to unemployment, idleness, and poverty. They reported feelings of alienation, hopelessness, and insecurity, which led them to engage in negative alternatives such as petty theft, prostitution, organized criminal activities, and cattle raiding in Karamoja.
- Youth desire to be consulted by the GOU and development partners and feel that appropriate programs and services generally do not reach them. Unless the root causes of vulnerability are understood and addressed, youth will continue doing what it takes for survival.
- Despite the most challenging situations, many youth spoke of their high energy, resilience, and a strong desire to study, find work, and contribute to peace and development in their communities. Development efforts should acknowledge their significant potential and seek to create substantive roles for youth to build confidence and leadership skills.

In sum, improving the lives of Uganda's vulnerable youth will require both additional resources and a shift in societal attitudes toward them. **By listening closely to the voices of these youth and strengthening collaborative efforts between GOU and development partners, Uganda can help these youth realize their dreams and tap their potential for the country's long-term development.**

SUMMING UP: NAVIGATING CHALLENGES. CHARTING HOPE.

YouthMap Uganda was designed to answer several key questions about the country's youth: what are their needs and hopes; how well are those needs and hopes addressed today; and how can development efforts help youth more effectively in the future. Over a thousand Ugandan youth clearly articulated and expressed their future aspirations, as well as their needs and challenges. By identifying specific gaps between young people's needs and the services and resources available, *YouthMap* attempts to provide critical information to inform future youth programming and investments. By giving voice to youth themselves, *YouthMap* captures the human potential that may inspire those investments.

YouthMap Uganda makes clear that the road ahead for Ugandan youth is marked by both obstacles and promise — from the challenges of widespread poverty and high unemployment to the potential of a young, growing population desiring better lives. By charting young people's hopes and potential as well as the roadblocks ahead, *YouthMap* seeks to provide the information needed to engage these resilient young people in constructing their own futures, their own road forward.

CONTRIBUTORS



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The International Youth Foundation (IYF) invests in the extraordinary potential of young people. Founded in 1990, IYF builds and maintains a worldwide community of businesses, governments, and civil-society organizations committed to empowering youth to be healthy, productive, and engaged citizens. IYF programs are catalysts of change that help young people obtain a quality education, gain employability skills, make healthy choices, and improve their communities.

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