

## **A SHADOW REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE**

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
On the occasion of Uganda's 2nd Cycle Universal Peer  
Review Due October 2016

Emerging Concerns on Youth Rights  
2011-2015

### **PREPARED AND SUBMITTED BY:**

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## A Note about Youth Rights Cluster

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- 1.1 The Youth Rights Cluster and working group drew participation from youth led and youth focused civil society organizations and individuals. They include Uganda Youth Network & Centre for Constitutional Governance (CCG)

## A Note on the Methodology of the Present Submission

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- 1.2 As the Government of Uganda's second cycle of review under the Universal Peer Review Mechanism (UPRM) is fast approaching, youth-focused civil society organizations under the Youth Rights Cluster, have developed a joint submission with a call for reflection on the following issues during the UPR Process as critical to improve the situation of youth and to overcome challenges to the realization of youth rights in Uganda. The issues included jobs, health care, education and training opportunities, and youth civic and political participation. The report recognizes the commendable efforts by the government of Uganda over the past 5 years geared towards the realization of rights of youth. It further highlights the emerging concerns and proposes recommendations aimed at improving the situation of youth.

## Emerging Concerns on the Rights of Youth in Uganda 2011-2015

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## II. STRUCTURAL ISSUES RELATING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUTH RIGHTS IN UGANDA

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### 2.1 Policy Environment

The Youth (15-24years) constitute 21.3% of the total population (National census report 2014). The policy environment is broadly supportive. The Uganda Youth Policy (2011-2016) underscores the need for employment creation through youth-led enterprise development and involvement of the public and private sector in creating opportunities for apprenticeships and protection against risks that affect youth livelihoods. The Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) Act (2008) recognizes a dual focus on formal and non-formal training as a strategy to

close the growing gap between what youth are taught (in BTVETs) and what businesses actually need. As of 2014, there were 175 public and 110 BTVET institutions (MoES, 2014). The total enrolment has steadily grown from 21,763 students in 2007 to 39,712 students in 2014, representing an 82% increase over the eight year period. The government has also registered success in narrowing the gender enrolment gap in BTVET institutions with an increase in female enrolment share from 29% in 2007 to 36% in 2014. The National Employment Policy and Uganda's Vision 2025 call upon all development partners to prioritize skills training for productive employment, promoting agriculture and enhancing its linkage with other sectors, increasing productivity across all enterprises, and mainstreaming vulnerable groups such as out-of-school youth. Commendably, government responsiveness has also been demonstrated through its prioritization of youth issues in the Second National Development Plan (NDPII) 2015/16 – 2019/20

## **2.2 Youth employment**

The youth unemployment rate remains high, estimated at 78 percent, this is attributed to slow economic growth, the small labour market, lack of sufficient experience and skills, a high population growth rate of 3.5%, the rigid education system, rural-urban migration and limited access to capital and support (Population Secretariat, (2012). However, limited public resources are allocated to the key sectors that are likely to boost employment creation, particularly for the youth. There is limited investment in the implementation of the BTVET 10 year strategic plan as well as in agriculture, the primary source of employment in Uganda. In the 2014/15 national budget, more taxes were levied on agricultural inputs, further exacerbating the already difficult conditions in the sector. In addition, there is still a gap in reaching all children in need of vocational training opportunities (UCRNN, 2014a). BTVET – opportunities cater for 40% of demand and most of the public and private BTVET institutions are not accessible to vulnerable youth due to the levies on learners and high costs for high quality and field oriented training (MoES, 2014) leading to low enrolment.

## **2.3 Right to Access skills for successful transition**

In *northern Uganda* employment opportunities are limited and youth face barriers gaining access to decent employment due to lack of skills. As a result of decades of conflict, many youth missed out on education or other skills development, including the transfer of agricultural skills. The *North Eastern region* a weak private sector, very limited financial access, chronic poverty and poor social services

including limited formal education and vocational training institutes. **Western Uganda** is characterized by a mix of post-conflict socio-economic deprivation and intermittent population movements arising out of the refugee influx brought on by the recurrent conflicts in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo. Youth lack access to quality education (both formal and non-formal) due to the high poverty levels in the region. **Central Uganda** continues to register an influx of youth from rural to urban areas, in search of livelihood and employment opportunities. The high rate of migration, coupled with high birth rates and low incomes for a big portion of the population continues to exacerbate the already high urban unemployment and underemployment problem, particularly among the youth. Most of the youth living in urban areas like Kampala are out of school migrants with low levels of social cohesion, high levels of isolation and weak social protection schemes (Adolescent Girls Vulnerability Index 2013). This reality points to the need to pay equal attention to the deprived children and youth in the urban areas.

## **2.4 Youth in Agriculture**

Agriculture remains the backbone of Uganda's economy. In 2012/13, the sector accounted for 25.3 percent of the country's GDP from 24.7 percent in 2010/11. It employs about 72 percent of the total labour force (formal and informal), 63 per cent are youth, mostly residing in the rural areas. Despite this, there is high attrition of youth from the sector<sup>1</sup>. Youth are constricted to subsistence farming as they have limited access to assets and other means of production, especially limited access to land and agricultural finance. Youth are also less likely to use improved inputs which would make their activities more productive, efficient and lucrative. This is compounded by limited public funding in agriculture. In the 2014/15 national budget, more taxes were levied on agricultural inputs, further exacerbating the already difficult conditions in the sector. Given the strong reliance on and significance agriculture, greater support towards transformation of the agriculture sector (especially through the development of commodity value chains) is important, while building the resilience of households (to prevent, mitigate inherent livelihood risks) and integrating the youth into the agriculture value chain.

## **2.5 Right to Access financial services**

While Uganda's resource-poor rural communities face a chronic lack of financing-

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<sup>1</sup> The Adolescent Girls Vulnerability Index: Guiding Strategic Investments in Uganda-UNICEF 2013

with only 4% of communities in Uganda having a bank/financial institution within the communities (UNHS, 2012/13), the unmet need for credit and loans from formal institutions disproportionately affects youth. Youth are considered to be a “high risk” segment (due to their lack of collateral combined with factors affecting harvest and yield beyond their control), and are therefore denied access to credit or loans by commercial banks.

## **2.6 Right to Access youth friendly sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services**

Youth in Uganda also face numerous health challenges, including high teenage pregnancy rates, with approximately 25% of young women between the ages of 15-19 being pregnant, and approximately 2,400 young women between the ages of 15 and 24 dying from pregnancy related complications each year. The Global AIDS info Report (UNAIDS, 2012) suggests that a large proportion of Uganda’s 150,000 new HIV infections every year are among young people.

Although the National Health Policy and National Adolescent Health Policy as well as the adolescent health standards and guidelines provide an avenue for provision of youth–friendly sexual and reproductive health services, Youth face significant challenges in accessing basic and critical health services, including sexual and reproductive health services. For instance, the adolescent health policy provides for the establishment of youth corners in health facilities, however, not all health facilities have these in place. In addition, much more needs to be done to expand services; improve staff attitudes, reduce costs and waiting time and ensure the availability of all services at one site (the ‘one-stop shop’ approach). Research shows that 34% of adolescents who want AIDS support services are not able to access them (UAC, 2014). Among the youth aged 15 –24 years of age, only 39.5 percent of the males and 38.1percent of the female have comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS. Youth friendly SRH information is currently provided by the MOH and other agencies such as Naguru Teenage Information and Health Centre, the German Foundation for World Population (DSW), and Reproductive Health Uganda, mostly in Kampala.

Adolescent girls and young women in rural areas face additional sexual and reproductive health challenges compounded by lack of reliable information on sexual and reproductive rights. In some communities, gendered social norms place high

value on girls' reproductive capabilities, while reinforcing harmful norms such as early marriage with limited or no access to contraception services. The sociocultural context is not conducive for young girls, to claim their sexual and reproductive rights, nor have they built skills to be able to do so.

## **2.7 Civic and Political Participation**

In their manifesto<sup>2</sup>, the youth also expressed concern over lack of participation by the youth in decision-making on key youth programs. Despite their numbers, youth face challenges in influencing decision-making on governance issues that affect their well-being. The National Youth Council, the primary channel through which youth should participate in governance, receives negligible funding while its District Youth Councils are largely non-functional. According to the youth, the government should ensure that youth actively and meaningfully participate in the development, implementation and monitoring of government policies and programs.

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<sup>2</sup> YOUTH under the umbrella body Youth Coalition on Electoral Democracy in Uganda developed a joint national youth manifesto with a call for a reflection of their demands in the party manifestos and programs of the next government to be elected.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

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- 1) Increase public funding to Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (BTJET)
- 2) Enhance access to skills training opportunities through BTJET, which provide an opportunity for creating new vocational centres and utilizing the available community polytechnics.
- 3) Governments must provide transparent financial support to young people by enacting youth friendly policies that allow them to access loans and grants to establish businesses and self-employment initiatives.
- 4) Facilitate job creation, skills development and enterprise opportunities targeting youth with a focus on the most excluded youth (rural and urban poor, pastoral, hard-to-reach areas)
- 5) Institute mechanisms to encourage youth involvement in the agricultural sector across the value chain by promoting the establishment of youth cooperatives and availing public land to youth.
- 6) Increase availability, access to and uptake of quality and affordable adolescent and youth–friendly health services including sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services.
- 7) Implement interventions to address current gaps in sexual and reproductive health rights – particularly with respect to reducing sexual and gender based violence affecting adolescents– as well as quality primary education, secondary school enrolment, retention and completion.
- 8) Support the youth to develop and implement community managed Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies.
- 9) Create safe and inclusive spaces for meaningful participation in decision making processes at local, national and international levels.