



Report of the



Regional Youth Summit Karamoja Region

Moroto PTC Grounds

14th -15th March 2024

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1.0 Background

The Uganda Demographic Health Survey of 2016 indicates that teenage pregnancy stands at 25%. Additionally, the Uganda AIDS Indicator Survey 2011 states that HIV prevalence among adolescents aged 10-14 years is at 1.9% for males and 2.3% for females, while 4% of young men and women aged 15-24 have already been infected with HIV.

While 75% of Uganda's population is below the age of thirty-five, 33% of our population comprises young people below the age of 19. This youthful population is potentially a powerful force for national economic development and transformation. However, young people face challenges resulting from rapid urbanization, globalization, the media and foreign cultural influence, exposure to inaccurate, age-inappropriate culturally and religiously insensitive information and materials.

There are increasing incidences of early sex, unintended pregnancies, child marriages, sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, sexual and gender based violence, sexual harassment, alcohol and substance abuse; leading to high school dropout rates and poor performance among the learners.

The Uganda's Vision 2040 and the National Development Plan emphasizes the high rates of early marriages and pregnancies and the lack of life skills, necessary to support the youth to practice safe sexual behaviour and resist negative peer pressure. Accordingly, access to HIV prevention and management programs for adolescent boys and girls as a key strategic action, has been prioritized in Uganda's National Development Plans.

Consequently, it is imperative that the Government, cultural, religious and community leaders, parents and civil society carry out their duties and responsibilities to prepare, empower and support young people with the right information and life skills, especially those related to sexuality and self-leadership. It is hoped that this will equip young people to make safe and healthy decisions about their lives and future, as they grow into leaders and drivers of the economy and Uganda as a country.

In this context, Hon. Janet Kataaha Museveni the First Lady of Uganda and Minister of Education and Sports, decided to hold Regional Life Skills Summits for secondary school student leaders with the theme: **"My Life, My Responsibility."** This is a report of the fifth Regional Youth Summit, which was held at the Core Primary Teachers College (PTC) Moroto Grounds, from the 14th to the 15th March 2024.

2.0 Overview of the Life Skills Summit

The Karamoja Region Life Skills Summit was attended by almost three thousand student leaders, drawn from a number of districts in the Karamoja Region.

Overseen by facilitators with specialized knowledge, the Summit addressed four main topics: World Views and Life Choices; Sexuality and Relationships; the Media and other Influences, Facts about HIV and AIDS, as well as Leadership and Goal Setting.



Students at the Regional Youth Summit in Karamoja for the First day.



The Karamoja Regional Youth Summit, DAY 1.

The students were divided into four main groups, with eight facilitators conducting the training sessions on a rotational basis, to ensure that the learners receive adequate guidance, in each of the four topics. Furthermore, a highly participatory methodology was adopted throughout the Summit, including: presentations using visual aids, group discussions, paired activities, debates, question and answer session, music and dance as well as skits.

The key questions at the Summit's foundation were:

- **Who am I:** This brought to light the fact that we are all created in God's image. God fearfully and wonderfully creates every individual, with a distinct identity. He values us all equally, regardless of our circumstances or backgrounds. As a result, no matter what others think or say, our identity is found in God. We therefore need to walk in authentic uniqueness and confidence
- **Why am I here?** The learners were informed that each of them is here on earth for a reason. Each one was created to fulfill a purpose and for predetermined destiny. It is therefore our mandate as human to discover our purposes and to live with intentionality. This promotes proper focus in whatever we undertake. It doesn't matter what you have gone through and today's challenges, knowing that you have purpose and destiny empowers us to keep on keeping on. We face life challenges with daily hope and passion.
- **Where am I going?** Vision is key to success in life. Defining one's vision and dream is important, because these are aligned to God's destiny for each of us. This vision becomes a driving force and motivating factor in life. Ambition is key to personal success and for impart in life. Like Steve Covey says in his book 7 habits of highly effective people, in any undertaking, we must always start with the end in mind!
- **How do I get there?** This is a question of life strategy. After defining one's vision, we need to set goals, strategies and milestones on how to achieve the defined visions. We also need to define life values that we shall live by – the no-negotiables principles by which we do life. These become the anchor and stability for life. Strategy provided stamina and guidance in this life's journey.

This strategy is related to the topic of **world view** – the lense through which we view and interpret life. It is our true north, the reference point for our thoughts, behaviours, character, life choices and ultimately our destiny. These questions are fundamental in guiding us as we choose between right

and wrong and as we navigate complexities of life.

If these four questions are answered correctly, then handling key aspects of life like sexuality, peer pressure, media and technology, health etc becomes easier.

The whole day sessions were powerful, evidenced by students' excellent feedback, comments and genuine questions.

3.0 Closing Ceremony

3.1 Remarks by the Head Teacher Moroto High School

Mr. Twaha Chebet Fayekwo, the Head Teacher of Moroto High School, thanked the First Lady and Hon. Minister of Education and Sports, for choosing Moroto High School, to host the Regional Summit.

He gave an overview of the host school's current state and introduced the participating schools. Mr. Fayekwo explained that one thousand two hundred forty two (1,242), students are enrolled in the school, with a higher proportion of boys than girls. He provided an update on the situation of teachers, who are on and off the pay roll, and who currently require additional financial support.



Mr. Twaha Chebet Fayekwo, the Head Teacher of Moroto High School while giving his remarks on day 2 of the Karamoja Regional Youth Summit held at Moroto High School.

He recognized the First Lady's contribution to the school during her tenure as Minister of Karamoja Affairs, specifically: staff houses, a girl's dormitory which was named Kataaha House, a school bus, text books and computers, as well as many other student benefits.

He pointed out the challenges the school is facing, which include; inadequate classrooms with some of the learners doing their lessons in the labs. Furthermore, the ICT Laboratory is small, with a capacity of 40 students. With just 35 computers in the school, he made an appeal for a bigger ICT Lab with modern technology and facilities. He also observed that considering the large student population, the library's capacity of only 200 learners is inadequate. Additionally, teachers have resorted to shared housing, because the staff houses are no longer adequate. There is also need for similar support to upgrade the infrastructure in all the other schools within Karamoja, since many school structures have asbestos roofing, which poses a health hazard to the learners and the staff.

The head teacher of Moroto High School also stated that additional teachers are required in the humanities disciplines, and some teachers do not have salaries. For the past 12 years, these teachers have relied on contributions from the Parent Teachers Association and the Board of Directors.

Turning to the teachers' salaries, he noted that while H.E the President of Uganda, had directed that the salaries of the Head teachers be enhanced, however this directive has not been implemented. He thus requested that the matter be considered in the following fiscal year, since as a science head teacher, he would retire without receiving a salary increase.

He concluded his remarks with a pledge to continue working with the First Ladies' Office to educate the next generation.

3.2 Remarks by the Executive Director OAFLAD

Mrs. Beat Bisangwa, the Executive Director of OAFLAD, informed the gathering, that the First Lady and Hon. Minister of Education and Sports was deeply saddened, by her inability to attend the Regional Youth Summit. She apologized to the students on her behalf, stating that the First Lady had sent her love and warm regards.



Mrs. Beat Bisangwa, the Executive Director of OAFLAD Uganda giving her remarks at the Karamoja Regional Youth Summit on Friday, March 15, 2024.

Mrs. Bisangwa talked about the origins of the Regional Summits and the topics covered by the young people over the last two days, which she said are based on four major questions. These questions guide the teachings at all the Summits, held across the country under the theme: *My Life, My Responsibility*. The four questions listed are:

- **Who am I?** Focusing on identity,
- **Why am I here?** Focusing on ones purpose,
- **Where am I going?** Focusing on personal vision and destiny, and;
- **How do I get there?** Focusing on values/strategies to realize purpose.

She expressed the First Lady's gratitude to the entire Moroto District Leadership, the head teachers of the participating schools and the teaching staff and administration of the Core PTC Moroto and Moroto High School, for their support and cooperation during the mobilization for, planning and implementation of the event.

She thanked the UN Women and the Uganda AIDS Commission for their partnership, experienced at all the previous Summits. She expressed optimism that the students were now ready to take responsibility for their lives and

thanked them for the commitment made to honor the **True Love Waits** Pledge, to themselves, their families and most importantly to God.

3.3 Second Chance at Education Testimonies

Ms. Angela Maruk and Ms. Gloria Loumo attested to the hope they received on learning of the “Second Chance at Education” opportunity through UN Women and FAWE Uganda after they had been forced to drop out of school.



They students were cautioned to avoid relationships and instead focus on their education since while the opportunity for a second chance at education exists the responsibility of bringing up a baby while at school is very challenging. The testimonies also showed that it is possible to set up income-generating activities to support yourself while in school.

Angela and Gloria expressed their appreciation to the UN Women leadership and the staff of FAWE Uganda, for their support and encouragement. They also thanked the Government for creating an enabling environment for girls who need to return to school following childbirth.

3.4 Sharing of the Summit Experience by Students

The student representative Ms. Gloria Shegen shared about the importance of training the youth, on the significance of focusing on their education and shunning immorality in order to fulfill their life purpose. She talked about the various Life Skills sessions held over the last two days and how the information shared had helped to open the students' eyes to the dangers and various barriers to their education that they must avoid.

Mr. Joseph Lodit represented the male students. He shared about the lesson on leadership and the group exercise that was conducted to help the learners

identify a leader they admire. He pointed out that his group spoke about H.E. the President of the Republic of Uganda who is an exemplary leader. He said the President had brought development to Karamoja, by improving infrastructure in the Region and the road network. He also applauded him for enhancing relationships with other leaders in the EA region, while promoting democracy at the national level.

3.5 Remarks by the Uganda AIDS (UAC) Director

Mr. Vincent Bagambe a Director at the UAC, represented the Director General. He expressed UAC's interest in seeing young people acquire the skills and information they need to know, to protect them today, and so build the nation in the future.

He expressed gratitude to the First Lady, who he pointed out serves as a role model for the entire country. "She is God-fearing and a mother, and we all look up to her to raise our children, in the same way she raised us" he said.



Mr. Vincent Bagambe a Director at the UAC giving his remarks at the Karamoja Regional Youth Summit. He represented the UAC Director General who was unable to make it for the summit.



Hope (UAC)



Tom Etii (UAC)

He explained that the First Lady is a Champion of many causes, including the fight against HIV and AIDS and the Prevention of Mother-to-child Transmission, which have resulted in significant progress in the elimination of HIV and AIDS in Uganda. He noted that the First Lady is now greatly contributing to the Campaign to teach young people Life Skills, through these Regional Summits.

In regard to the current statistics he pointed out that there are 52,000 new HIV infections in Uganda and of these 20,000 are within the bracket of 15-24 years of age. He emphasized that since young girls account for 70% of new infections, it is truly remarkable that the Highest Office organized the Summit with a focus on youth, in order to safeguard their lives.

Mr. Bagambe pointed out that Karamoja's HIV prevalence of 1.3% is lower than the national prevalence and urged young people to keep it that way. Noting that no one should allow HIV to enter the community so as to avoid increasing the current prevalence. "The message I leave with you is that your life is your responsibility, if you want to succeed save your life now!" he said. He called on everyone to share positive messages regarding HIV prevention so as to protect the younger generation.

He thanked Mrs. Beat Bisangwa for operationalizing the First Lady's aspirations, through the ongoing Life Skills Regional Summits. He also thanked the host, the schools represented at the Summit, and all of the organizations that provided resources to make the event possible. "May you all play your role to keep safe!" he said.

3.6 Remarks by the UN Women Representative

Mrs. Agnes Kisembo represented the UN Women Country Representative Paulina Chiwangu. She thanked the Executive Director OAFLAD for organizing

the event. She urged the young people to take the Life Skills training seriously, because the Government had placed its trust in them, with the expectation that they would pass on this knowledge to their peers.

“Please do not take this opportunity for granted, make the very best of this two day training, use all the information that you have received and share it with your colleagues” she said. She pointed out that when a person's purpose is unknown, abuse is inevitable. It is therefore important to know and discover ones purpose early so as to avoid misusing life, gifts, and time.



Mrs. Agnes Kisembo making her remarks at the Karamoja Regional Youth Summit. She represented the UN Women Country Representative Paulina Chiwangu.

Ms. Kisembo urged parents and guardians to take the time to earn the trust of the children, in their care. This will help to boost their confidence, allowing them to share their challenges with them, rather than strangers who provide incorrect advice. She observed that young people face stigma as a result of negative cultures and sexual abuse, which can result in excommunication. Consequently, there is an urgent need to empower girls and women in those areas that experience significant gender disparities.

She concluded her remarks by offering advice on how to help the younger generation live productive lives while cautioning them about the dangers of social media, which can be a double-edged sword.

3.7 True Love Waits Card Pledge

The Executive Director OAFLAD, Mrs. Beat Bisangwa, introduced the **True Love Waits** concept to the stakeholders in attendance at the Summit.



The Executive Director OAFLAD, Mrs. Beat Bisangwa.



A student holding a True Love Waits card



She mentioned that the young people had signed the cards and pledged to themselves, their parents, and God, that they would abstain from sex until they were married. In the presence of the Chief Guest the students collectively read out their **True Love Waits** pledge to those in attendance.

3.8 Remarks by the MP Moroto Municipality

The Member of Parliament Moroto Municipality, Hon. Francis Adome appreciated the First Lady and Hon. Minister of Education and Sports, for always coming to support Karamoja. He conveyed the appreciation of the people of Karamoja, to all the stakeholders in attendance, for their role in promoting the development of the Region.



The Member of Parliament Moroto Municipality, Hon. Francis Adome making his remarks at the Karamoja Regional Youth Summit held at Moroto High School on Friday, March 15, 2024.

He told students that he was educated at Moroto High School and participated in athletics and dance while he was a student there. He observed that Uganda is one of the nations with the youngest population in the world thus the need for Government to focus on empowering the youth.

Hon. Adome urged the students to embrace a life of discipline. He pointed out the importance of setting life goals that are realistic. He called upon them to adopt a positive mindset and be mindful of the fact that the world is now a global village interconnected through social media and technology.

“It is important to focus on personal development and nourishing your mind with positive thoughts rather than getting overly excited about social media, which can have both positive and negative effects,” he cautioned. He pointed out the importance of time management and building a reading culture, because learning is continuous and no man has enough knowledge.

“Be vigilant regarding the people you surround yourself with. Spend most of your time with people who encourage you to live a focused and productive life”, he concluded.

3.9 Message from the First Lady and Hon. Minister of Education and Sports

Prof. Dr. Rev. Samuel Luboga, Chairperson of the Education Service Commission, represented the First Lady and Hon. Minister of Education and Sports. He made a few observations before delivering the First Lady's message, saying that he was honored and privileged to be looking at the future of Karamoja, with so many precious young people in attendance.



Prof. Dr. Rev. Samuel Luboga, Chairperson of the Education Service Commission. He represented the First Lady at the Karamoja Regional Youth Summit.

He observed that despite a challenging childhood that saw him walk bare footed to school throughout his primary education, herding cattle and having to fetch water, while walking long distances, he rose above his circumstances to become a doctor, surgeon and an Associate Professor of Anatomy. He pointed out that he also overcame his poor performance in Mathematics, by choosing to practice and focus on the subject every day, until he achieved the good results that eventually enabled him to study Medicine.

He shared tips on what helped him succeed despite losing his father while in secondary school and having to support a large family of 17 siblings and their mothers. He overcame these hardships by valuing his education and giving his life to Christ at an early age. Dr. Luboga stated that he literally "carried his cross and denied himself" all worldly pleasures such as alcohol and smoking, while choosing to abstain from sex and honor his wife in a monogamous marriage.

You too can make it in life and succeed in your dreams by abstaining from sex. Using the analogy of a staircase, he shared a story about a young man who was very broke. When asked why, he explained that he had missed a step. His friends then inquired as to how missing one step could result in such a great fall, to which he replied that he had missed the first step, and once this occurs, the fall is so great that you miss many opportunities.

He concluded his remarks by urging all those gathered at the Summit, not to miss a step by compromising their integrity and purity.

Below is the Message from the First Lady and Hon. Minister of Education and Sports as delivered by her representative:

It gives me great pleasure and honor to witness the **5th Life Skills Regional Program** here in the Karamoja region, where I spent several years promoting the development and well-being of this dear community. I acknowledge the transformation that is now taking place in this region, and I thank the leadership and people of Karamoja for their commendable efforts to support government programs that are improving our people's lives!

Today, we are here to promote the well-being of both boys and girls in the Karamoja region, by teaching Life Skills, which are critical to their development. We are all aware that simply sending children to school and hoping for an environment conducive to their education, is insufficient without addressing learning barriers.

Furthermore, while girls and boys require life skills in equal measure, there are issues specific to girls that present significant barriers to reaching their full potential. These include: childhood marriage, teenage pregnancy, gender based violence, restrictions on the enjoyment of their rights, that are imposed by traditional customs and culture, limited opportunities for girls, and the existing high school dropout rates.

These challenges are further driven by lack of parental support and involvement in their children's education, discriminatory gender norms and attitudes at the household and community level as well as the low perceived value of girls' education.

While the people of the Karamoja region have a beautiful heritage of cultural practices that are unique, there are a number of gendered traditional practices that violate the girl child's right to education, and that are exacerbated by community inaction or permissiveness to these vices.

Therefore, this life skills program is designed to empower both boys and girls, to realize their full potential by providing them with knowledge and skills, that positively shape their mind sets and worldviews enabling them to make the right choices in life and to set their personal goals.

The Karamoja region faces a unique challenge in terms of nomadic cultural practices, which involve boy children in cattle keeping, limiting their access to educational opportunities. While this practice has significantly decreased as a result of community awareness, there are still a number of boys in the community who are still not in school, necessitating continued vigilance in addressing this issue.

I therefore appeal to the political leadership, as well as stakeholders in the education sector, to step up their efforts to mobilize and raise community awareness about children's rights and responsibilities, with a focus on ensuring an enabling environment and community support for, access to education for both the boy and girl child. I also want to emphasize that Cultural Leaders have a special responsibility to focus on eradicating harmful cultures, which prevent both boys and girls from acquiring an education.

I would now like to turn to the young people who are in our midst today. I thank you all for the choice you have made to attend school and to persevere and work hard in your studies. I encourage you to share the teachings and messages you have acquired here with the other young people in your communities; please choose to be your brothers' keeper in line with the Lord's commandment in **Mathew 22:39** that states:

"And the second commandment is this: love your neighbor as you love yourself".

The practice of loving one another requires that, you value and defend each other against the obstacles that hinder your ability to receive an education, which will ultimately enable you to live honorable and productive lives as Ugandan citizens. This is the biblical concept of being your "brother's keeper", that requires us to look out for and take responsibility for the well-being of others.

I also urge you to embrace the sense of patriotism that the Government is currently promoting among the younger population. Being Ugandan citizens should make us proud! It is our collective duty to love this country, respect and protect its natural resources, and acknowledge the blessings that God has bestowed upon us by being good stewards.

Please live responsibly and develop good habits. The habits and positive behavior you develop today, will shape the adult you will become tomorrow, as the next generation that will continue to align our nation, with her God-given purpose. Additionally, take seriously the teachings you have heard here, so as to keep sexually pure, until the right time comes for you to get married.

As your facilitators have taught you, in this *Life Skills Program*, avoid getting into sexual relationships now, because "**True Love Waits**"! Remember that anyone who tries to entice you into an inappropriate relationship, is selfish and ill-intentioned, and you should avoid them.

Furthermore, engaging in sexual relationships outside the appropriate time for marriage has many negative consequences for your education, physical health, and emotional well-being. Guard your hearts and minds against negative influences that tempt you to live inappropriate and ungodly lifestyles. Avoid the peer pressure to engage in mind-corrupting activities such as: pornography, media that promotes immorality, and addictions caused by drug, alcohol, and other substance abuse. These things have long-term consequences on your health and quality of life, in addition to the negative impact they have on your education and life goals!

I would now like to express my gratitude to all the stakeholders and our development partners, who have contributed to the organisation and implementation of this Program.

I thank the Uganda AIDS Commission, for integrating in this Program, messages on the effects of HIV and AIDS and its prevention, amongst young people. I also appreciate our UN Family for your continued support to my team and your contribution to the success of this event.

My gratitude goes to the district leadership in the Karamoja region, for your cooperation and for mobilising so many young people, to participate in this event. I thank the Moroto Core PTC, our hosts, for their contribution and encouragement while we planned this Program. I also appreciate the head teachers, teaching staff and all the learners from the various institutions gathered here, for availing themselves to be trained in life skills.

It is important that time is made available during the regular school assembly period, to sensitise all the learners, to ensure that the young people are held accountable to the **True Love Waits** commitment, evidenced here, by the signing of the **True Love Waits** Cards.

I am grateful to the Facilitators and the Organisation of First Ladies for Development (OAFLAD) Team, led by Mrs. Beat Bisangwa, for always being available for this noble cause!

I applaud you all for your participation here and I wish you the best as you apply these life skills in your everyday lives, both at school and in your communities at home.

4.0 Conclusion

The Regional Life Skills Summit was a great success. The young people were very responsive throughout the teachings and they participated actively in the Summit activities. The participants made a resounding resolve to sign the True Love Waits pledge cards while committing to hold each other accountable to their pledge.

The teaching staff from the various participating schools pledged to support the students to ensure that those who were not in attendance receive reports from their peers so as to enable them benefit from the information shared at the event. The students left the Summit energized and inspired to live productive lives that are centered on their values and life goals.

5.0 Gallery



A group photo with partners and stakeholders



Student leaders in group photo



A Student participating in one of the sessions



Students during the group discussion

