

# UYDEL Newsletter

July to October 2024



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## Welcome note

Dear Friends, welcome to the latest edition of The UYDEL Newsletter! We are excited to share our recent activities and achievements as we continue our mission to empower youth and promote positive change in our communities. In this issue, you'll find highlights from activities that focus on the boys, workshops aimed at enhancing our programs for girls, engaging digital skills training sessions, and inspiring alumni gatherings. We also feature updates on our various initiatives that focus on preventing violence against children and fostering partnerships with local businesses. Your support plays a vital role in our work, and we are grateful for your commitment to making a difference. Together, we are creating opportunities for vulnerable children and young people to thrive.

Thank you for being a part of our journey!

### Editor



*Nakate Gabriela Kulabako, she holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Work. As the editor of this newsletter, she is committed to highlighting the impactful work being done by UYDEL and its partners to transform lives and foster resilience among young people in Uganda.*

**Sincere gratitude to the editorial support team:**  
*Kasirye Rogers, Anna Nabulya, Mutaawe Rogers, Nakijoba Barbara and Nassaka Jaqueline.*

## Focusing on Boys in Kampala and Wakiso Slums

This quarter, special attention has been directed towards supporting the boys in our programs. Recognizing the unique challenges they face, we have tailored our interventions to ensure that boys receive targeted mental health support, life skills training, vocational skilling and counseling services based on the 4Rs (research, rehabilitation, recovery and reintegration). Through peer mentorship, digital skills workshops, and behavioral change initiatives, we aim to foster resilience, empower them to overcome adversity, and guide them towards brighter futures. The numbers of boys in slums are still huge and your kind help is needed through UYDEL for more boys to benefit from the psycho-social support and vocational skills. Please send an email incase you would like to support and receive more information; [kasiryer@yahoo.com](mailto:kasiryer@yahoo.com)

The boys that have been supported at Masooli rehabilitation center

Year	Males	Females	Total
2013	134	169	298
2014	141	179	320
2015	223	263	486
2016	115	238	353
2017	69	88	157
2018	50	102	251
2019	99	152	251
2020	50	90	140
2022	99	180	279
2023	168	134	302

The boys engaged in various vocational skills and life skills sessions at the safe space.



## Strengthening the Girls Empowering Girls (GEG) Program

UYDEL with support from UNICEF and the Belgian government is supporting 1500 girls (2019-2025). With 102 peer mentors to mentor the girls, cash transfers and service referrals. 532 girls have returned to school and the rest have completed vocational skilling. The program was evaluated by Economic Policy Research Center and it was confirmed unique and the best social protection for the best urban youth. .

Highlights:

- Regular review of mentoring and cash transfer pillars.
- Challenges in referral services addressed.
- Peer mentors shared insights on the GEG Management Information System (MIS)



*A meeting of peer mentors*



*Some of the girls supported by the program*

## Digital Skills for Out of School Girls in Urban Slums

A digital skills training and workshop was held by KCCA at the Employment Bureau Services to benefit 200 girls under the Girls Empowering Girls Program. So far 70% of the girls have benefited. This new innovation is blended with psycho-social and support life skills and it is meant to improve access to digital employment. They can get jobs as data entrants, cashiers, cafes managers and also as assistant secretaries.



*Digital skills training in session*



*The girls engaged in a digital skills training*

## Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Retreat

On the 5th to 9th of August, UYDEL participated in a workshop organized by UNODC for stakeholders from other organizations, government and law enforcement at Protea Hotel Entebbe to develop strategies for preventing and countering violent extremism (PVE). This initiative was essential for developing the training manual.

The retreat included training sessions that enhanced participants' capacity for effective program implementation through collaborative workshops and expert discussions. Program managers from various organizations focused on best practices and innovative approaches tailored to their specific contexts.

By fostering a network of dedicated professionals, the retreat aimed to empower attendees with the skills needed to make a meaningful impact in their communities, highlighting the importance of collective action against violent extremism.



*Participants that attended the retreat*



*Participants engaged in discussions*

## Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Training Workshop for Trainers of Trainers

UYDEL organized a Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) Training Workshop for trainers of trainers which was held at Protea Hotel, Kololo to equip 30 participants with essential skills to combat violent extremism. The workshop covered key topics including recruitment tactics, counter-narratives, and community engagement strategies. It was facilitated by Prof. Katende of Makerere University an expert in PCVE. Northern and Eastern Uganda will mostly benefit from this training as they have been affected by violent extremism in the past.

Bringing together representatives from government, civil society, educational institutions, and law enforcement, the event featured interactive discussions and collaborative exercises. Participants left empowered with practical tools and expressed a strong desire for ongoing training and collaboration in addressing the risks of violent extremism. If you need training for youth workers please contact us.



*Participants that attended the training workshop*



*Participants in a training session*

## Drug use prevention initiatives

### Rapid Study on Synthetic Drugs in Uganda

The rise of synthetic drugs in Uganda has become a significant public health, economic, and security issue, with the illicit trade fueling organized crime, terrorism, and corruption. Synthetic drugs, or New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), are chemically engineered to mimic traditional illicit drugs like cannabis, cocaine, and heroin. Despite their dangerous potency, they are often marketed as legal or safe alternatives. However, research on synthetic drug use in Uganda has been minimal, making it difficult to fully understand the scale of the issue.

A collaborative study involving US-Fulbright Humphrey Fellows, conducted in Uganda, Togo, and Nigeria, explored the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding synthetic drugs. Findings revealed that synthetic opioids like codeine and tramadol are the most commonly used, while others like fentanyl, oxycodone, and methamphetamine are also in circulation, albeit less frequently. The study also highlighted the availability of processed and unprocessed herbal substances in rural markets and burial events. Alarmingly, many users reported severe adverse effects, with the average age of first use being 21 years, though some began using these substances before the age of 18.

The study recommends a larger-scale investigation to determine the full magnitude of synthetic drug use in Uganda. It also stresses the need for improved surveillance to identify entry points of these drugs and calls for comprehensive public health campaigns to educate youth about the associated risks. Additionally, the National Drug Authority should enhance its role by not only focusing on enforcement but also by funding awareness and educational initiatives. Addressing the growing problem of synthetic drug use is crucial to safeguarding Uganda's youth and society as a whole.

For further details please contact [mutaawe2@gmail.com](mailto:mutaawe2@gmail.com)

## Strengthening communities to prevent and reduce drug use through community coalitions in Uganda

This programme is funded by CADCA and US State Department, INL since 2017 where UYDEL has established coalitions in Bwaise, Nansana, Kalerwe and Matugga. During this period, UYDEL conducted technical assistance sessions in July attended by 28 coalition members (15 males and 13 females) in Matugga and Kalerwe.

In addition, Uganda held the first ever networking and training session involving 4 coalitions at Masooli Rehabilitation centre- UYDEL from 12th to 16th August 2024. The sessions promoted sharing best practices and interactions that fostered learning and knowledge sharing platforms. It provided coalitions an opportunity to learn, re-learn and re-adjust. The training session was facilitated by Mr. Colber Prosper, CADCA Trainer.

### Outcomes from the Best practices sessions

- The event offered an opportunity for Peer-to-peer learning among the members especially during the Joint coalitions meeting where all the coalitions were brought together. The new coalitions got inspiration and learnt from the old coalitions (Nansana and Bwaise)
- Coalitions drew up their work plans and future goals for future follow up to actualize their workplans.
- Participants acquired new skills and knowledge through workshops, training sessions, and shared experiences, which will help strengthen the coalition's overall capacity.



Members from the four coalitions during the best practices sharing session at UYDEL Masooli center



Mr. Colber Prosper during an In-person training for Kalerwe coalition

## Drugs Hapana School Conference

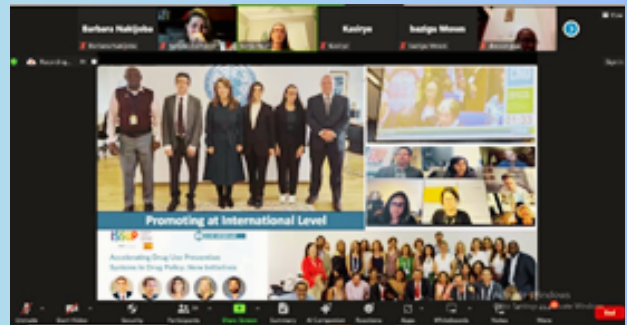
On July 25, Dr. Kasirye Rogers presented at the Drugs Hapana conference at Hotel Africana, addressing the urgent need to discourage drug use in schools. He highlighted trends in substance abuse among students and shared actionable recommendations for educators and policymakers on creating drug-free environments. His engaging insights sparked lively discussions, emphasizing his commitment to effective drug prevention strategies for youth.



*Dr. Kasirye addressing students at the conference*

## International Society of Substance Use Professionals follow up meeting

On August 1, the International Society of Substance Use Professionals (ISSUP), Uganda Chapter held a virtual Zoom meeting to discuss the Thessaloniki conference that happened on the 24th to 28th June and share updates on activities, achievements, and challenges. The meeting aimed to enhance collaboration among members, allowing them to exchange insights on ongoing projects and strategies for overcoming obstacles. This gathering strengthened the ISSUP network in Uganda, ensuring that members remain engaged in their shared goals in substance use prevention.



*Virtual zoom meeting discussion*

## Artisans and Instructors Meeting

A gathering of 40 instructors from various UYDEL safe spaces was held at the Masooli rehabilitation and retreat Center. The aim was to review the vocational skills training and social-economic and re-integration activities so as to enhance the quality of education for our slum youth coming out of trafficking, child labor, substance use and PVE. The meeting fostered collaboration, allowing instructors to share experiences and discuss common challenges. Participants engaged in group discussions and interactive sessions to explore effective teaching strategies.



*Instructors during the meeting*

## Assessing the Impact of UYDEL's Slum Youth Initiatives

Professor Margherita, Associate Dean for Research and Doctoral Programs Oregon Health & Science University-Portland State University School of Public Health, USA. A longtime friend of UYDEL, as early as 2000 with Professor Mary Jane pioneered the Street Smart CDC based practice for street and urban youth on HIV/AIDS, drug use, mental health and vocational skilling.

She currently visited the different UYDEL psycho-social safe spaces to observe ongoing programs and engage with staff and beneficiaries. Her visit aimed to assess the impact of UYDEL's initiatives and gather insights that will significantly contribute to the development of current and future projects. Her expertise will inform strategies and initiatives at UYDEL, ensuring that programs remain relevant and impactful for the communities they serve.

She was delighted to find that the work that they had started was still going strong.



*Professor Margherita at Banda Youth Center*



*Her visit to Makindye Youth Center*

## Celebrating World Mental Health Day at UYDEL safe spaces.

On World Mental Health Day, social workers at various youth safe spaces led mental health discussions aimed at increasing awareness and understanding among the youth. The sessions focused on equipping beneficiaries with essential knowledge about mental health, helping them recognize the importance of mental well-being in their lives. Through interactive discussions, the youth were encouraged to openly share their experiences, learn coping strategies, and identify ways to seek support when needed. The initiative highlighted the role of mental health education in empowering young individuals to make informed decisions and manage stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges effectively.



*Youth at the Banda center in a mental health discussion*



*Youth at the Makindye center in a mental health discussion*



## Preparing Slum Youth as Peer Mentors for Slum Youth

A peer mentor training program for 30 youth under the Urban Youth Empowerment Project (YEP-2023/7) from September 17th to 19th, 2024 was held at the Namirembe Resource Center. The training aimed to equip young people with the necessary skills to become effective peer mentors and contribute to positive youth development. Through interactive sessions, role plays and group discussions, they gained practical experience and confidence in their mentorship abilities. The training provided a valuable opportunity for young people to connect with their peers, build relationships, and develop leadership skills.



*The YEP peer mentors and their trainers*



*Training of peer mentors in session*

## Alumni Engagement Event

On July 27, a heartwarming alumni gathering for 300 alumni was held at the Masooli rehabilitation Center to reconnect former and current beneficiaries of UYDEL. The event aimed to celebrate successes, share experiences, and inspire hope among current beneficiaries.

Alumni expressed gratitude for UYDEL's support and shared personal journeys, emphasizing perseverance and dedication. Engaging discussions fostered a supportive atmosphere, encouraging current beneficiaries to remain hardworking in their pursuits.

This gathering strengthened the bonds among participants and highlighted the lasting impact of UYDEL's programs in transforming lives. A special thanks goes to UNODC, Mary Jane and UYDEL staff for making the event possible. UYDEL was impressed with the progress and the positive recovery you have attained. Asant Sana.



*Interactions between the beneficiaries*

## Austria Intern Spotlight: Nathalie's Experience at UYDEL



*Nathalie at the EASY project graduation*



*Nathalie with some young people engaged in sports*

### **We were able to catch up with Nathalie:**

#### **Hi Nathalie, how has your experience at UYDEL been so far?**

"My experience has been very positive. I particularly enjoy the home visits and peer mentor training. The team is young yet professional, and we bond really well. I appreciate that everyone speaks English, though I sometimes feel left out when local dialects are spoken. The team has guided me without overwhelming me, allowing me to bring my own creativity."

#### **What motivated you to intern here in Uganda?**

"I have a great interest in Africa and chose Uganda by coincidence. The beautiful nature and friendly people drew me in, especially after meeting some welcoming Ugandans in Austria. My professor also has ties with a university here."

#### **Can you share a memorable moment you've had while working with the youth?**

"The graduation of the beneficiaries from the EASY project stands out. Seeing the joy and energy when the young people started dancing was unforgettable. The home visits gave me a deeper understanding of their lives."

#### **What new skills have you learned during your time at UYDEL?**

"I've improved my communication and interpersonal skills, learning to encourage people to open up. I've even picked up some Luganda!"

#### **How do you think this experience will influence your future career?**

"This experience has taught me not to judge others' ways of living. It has shown me that everyone is equal, and no matter how hard life gets, we all find ways to make it work."

#### **What advice would you give to future interns at UYDEL?**

"Learn some basic Luganda phrases before you arrive. Understand your boundaries and when to say no. Bring a lot of joy and be ready for fun and celebrations!"



*Nathalie engaged in sports activities*

## Exploring Uganda

Professor Margherita with some of the UYDEL staff also embarked on a journey to explore Uganda's natural beauty. She visited the iconic Source of the Nile, the birthplace of the world's longest river, and the breathtaking Sezibwa Falls. Her visit provided her with a unique opportunity to experience Uganda's rich biodiversity and stunning landscapes.



*Her visit to Sezibwa Falls with some of the UYDEL team*



*Her visit to the source of the Nile*

## Accessing Employment for Urban Slum Youth

Recent results from Uganda's national census reveal an alarming increase in unemployment rates, with youth being the hardest hit. Among the most affected are young people living in urban slums, who face limited opportunities for education and employment.

Recognizing this urgent need, the Access Project has stepped in to offer a solution. This vocational skilling initiative connects young people with local business owners, providing them with opportunities to develop essential skills and gain valuable mentorship. Through workshops and hands-on training, particularly in the Hairdressing Program, participants not only learn practical skills but also explore career paths and entrepreneurship.

Targeting youth aged 16 to 24, the Access Project is empowering a new generation with the tools needed for success. By fostering a supportive environment, this initiative is helping young people in Banda overcome barriers to employment, build confidence, and create sustainable futures. Through its focus on mentorship and skill development, the project is playing a critical role in reducing youth unemployment in Uganda's slums.



*Beneficiaries interacting with the business owner*

## Life Skills Training Program

A group of UYDEL social workers recently conducted a life skills training program at the Masooli Center to equip 120 participants with essential skills for personal and professional development. The training focused on critical topics such as problem-solving, decision-making, and effective communication.

Through interactive workshops and group discussions, participants actively engaged in practicing their skills, empowering them to navigate life's challenges and work toward their goals. This initiative not only enhances individual capabilities but also fosters a sense of community and support among attendees.



*Young people receiving instructions*



*Group work activity among the participants*

## Showcasing Vocational Skills Training Across Centers/ Safe spaces

At UYDEL, we offer a wide range of vocational skills training programs designed to equip vulnerable youth with practical skills for self-reliance and employment. Throughout our various centers, youth engage in hands-on training in fields such as catering, hairdressing, tailoring, carpentry, and more. These programs not only build their technical expertise but also boost their confidence and provide them with viable career paths.

The images below capture some of these transformative moments—youth hard at work, learning, and honing their skills that will enable them to secure a better future.





Behavioral change sessions and life skills building to enhance resilience, pictures shown below;



## Africa and Asia Drug Use Prevention Influencers 2024

In September 2024, prevention influencers from Africa and Asia gathered in Kerala, India, for a Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop on Engaging Youth in Drug Use Prevention, organized by the Colombo Plan Drug Advisory Programme. Representing UYDEL was the Deputy Director, Anna Nabulya, who joined other participants in learning how to mobilize young people for drug prevention efforts.

Over six days, participants delved into the Universal Prevention Curriculum for Substance Use (UPC 81), designed to provide foundational knowledge about substance use disorders and shape effective youth champions. Guided by experts such as Ms. Angela Garcia and Prof. Grace Duka, the workshop emphasized the pivotal role youth play in sustaining prevention initiatives.

Key modules included Tools for Prevention Projects and Prevention Influencers, which equipped participants with practical skills in project management and leadership. As they returned to their communities, the attendees left not just with certificates but with a renewed commitment to empowering young people and promoting drug prevention.

A special thank you to the Colombo Plan for making this training possible, and to Dichen Choden for her unwavering support and organization.



*All the participants that attended in the training*



*The UYDEL representative*

## The Global Citizenship Education Conference in Seoul

A representative from UYDEL recently attended the Advanced Workshop on Global Citizenship Education (GCED) for Alumni 2024 in Seoul, Korea, from September 2nd to 6th. Organized by the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU), this transformative workshop connected alumni from around the world, allowing them to share ideas and experiences on promoting global citizenship and building inclusive communities.

Additionally, the UYDEL representative spoke at the 9th International Conference on GCED, themed "Revitalizing Multilateralism for Peace." The conference brought together over 300 global citizens, where the representative emphasized the importance of Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation (PM&E) in advancing Global Citizenship Education. Engaging communities, particularly youth, in shaping their education fosters ownership and creates a deeper impact.

Key insights shared included the importance of involving communities especially young people in shaping and assessing their own education. This participatory approach fosters a sense of ownership and drives deeper impact. The representative emphasized that moving from education for global citizenship to education by global citizens is crucial for creating meaningful change.



*The UYDEL representative*



*A panel discussion during the conference*

## Education Advocacy at Africa Youth Peace Symposium

A representative from UYDEL had the opportunity to speak at the Africa Youth Peace Symposium, held on October 2nd and 3rd, 2024, in commemoration of the International Day of Non-Violence. Organized by UNESCO MGIEP under their sixth Ahinsa Dialogue, the symposium focused on education as a key tool for peacebuilding in Africa.

The UYDEL representative advocated for the review and adjustment of educational curriculums to address the current needs of the job market. They highlighted the challenges many young graduates face due to degrees that do not align with employment demands, which in turn contributes to socio-economic challenges and conflict. Localizing learning materials to make education more relevant and accessible was also a key point of discussion.

This engagement underscores UYDEL's commitment to fostering peace through education.



*The UYDEL representative during the symposium*

## Spotlight on Young Women's Mental Health in Uganda's Urban Slums



## The TOPOWA Study: Understanding the Social Drivers of Mental Health

The TOPOWA study (which means to "never give up" in Luganda) is a groundbreaking research project funded by the NIH that is designed to explore the social determinants of mental health among young women living in Kampala's urban slums. It's a community-based project that leverages our longstanding relationship with the Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL). This community-based organization has served thousands and thousands of young people, over the past 30 years, with vocational training, psychosocial support and health referrals. Many of the young people they serve reside in the urban slums across Kampala. And, they have first hand insight on their needs. The young women in the slums face unique and compounding challenges, such as poverty, overcrowding, gender-based violence, substance abuse and other health inequities, all of which exacerbate mental health concerns.

As part of the ongoing TOPOWA study, we examine the prevalence of anxiety, depression, suicidality, and substance use among young women in the slums. The key project component is our prospective cohort study where we follow 300 women for 2 1/2 years to learn more about their mental health concerns, needs and to identify intervention strategies. We check in with the women every three months and ask how they are doing. Early results indicate that nearly two-thirds of the participants suffer from at least one mental health condition, with comorbidities (co-occurring conditions) being particularly common.

The early findings are troubling and indicate that anxiety, depression, and suicidality are common, fueled by the harsh realities of life in these urban slums, where access to basic healthcare services, including mental health support, is severely limited.

## **Closing remarks**

As we close this edition of the UYDEL newsletter, we are reminded of the incredible progress we have made together in empowering and uplifting vulnerable youth in our community. From vocational training to mental health initiatives, every activity and program we've undertaken reflects our unwavering commitment to creating safer, healthier, and brighter futures. Our collective efforts are transforming lives, and we are excited for the continued journey ahead. Let's remain dedicated to our mission and strive to reach even greater milestones in the coming months. Thank you for your support, and together, we will continue making a lasting impact!