



**MEMORANDUM**

**OF THE YOUTH OF UGANDA**

**PRESENTED**

**TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

**DURING THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY  
CELEBRATIONS**

**ON 12<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2021**

**AT**

**KOLOLO CEREMONIAL GROUNDS**

Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Uganda,

The Hon. Cabinet Ministers and Ministers of State,

The Members of Parliament,

The United Nations Resident Coordinator,

National Executive Committee members of the National Youth Council,

The East African Community Youth Ambassador for Uganda

All Youth from Various parts of the Country

Ladies & Gentlemen

## **A. SALUTATIONS**

Your Excellency, on behalf of the youth of Uganda, I wish to express our greatest appreciation for your acceptance to preside over this year's International Youth Day even amidst the challenges of Covid 19. We are grateful as the youth leadership that you have always spared time to attend to issues pertaining to the young people of Uganda with great attention to detail and often with necessary education. For a second year running your excellency, the International Youth Day is celebrated in a scientific manner due to necessary restrictions to control the spread of the pandemic in our population. In the same regard, we wish to express our appreciation to you for the clear, exemplary and steadfast leadership that you have demonstrated in the fight against Covid 19 placing Uganda, as one of the best performing countries in dealing with the pandemic.

We also thank you for the new Ministers to the youth. The cabinet minister Hon. Betty Amongi is a great mentor for us in many things and the State Minister for

Youth and Children Affairs couldn't have been easier to work with. We are still learning not to stand up when she enters a room, as she demands.

## **B. DEDICATION**

Your Excellency, it has been the general consensus of the youth of Uganda that this International Youth Day appreciates all the gallant sons and daughters of Uganda who ably represented our Country in the recently concluded Olympic Games held in Tokyo Japan. Our congratulations go to our golden boys and girls who won multiple medals and placed Uganda as the second best performing country from our continent. We extend our appreciations to all the athletes that held our flag in the different sporting events; the world knows Uganda more today than a few weeks ago because of your effort.

We appeal to the Government to increase even more, the support for sports development centres and incubation programs like regional and national schools and University competitions because our greatest potentials may still lie unknown and unsought. Your Excellency is familiar with our people of Karamoja who jump higher than many of us can manage, in their cultural dances. Perhaps a high jump development center there may increase our medal tally in future Olympic games. We therefore dedicate this International Youth Day to our golden boys and girls who participated in the most prestigious games of the Olympic 2021.

## **C. The IYD Theme and implications**

The theme for this year's International Youth Day is ***Youth Innovations for Transformation of Food Systems and Sustainable Human Health***. For our country, this theme is timely for the expansion of the scope and potential of our Agricultural sector and Food value chain to respond to the needs of our youth while also requiring young people to be part and parcel of that undertaking.

Through years of deliberate government effort, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics now puts the figure of Ugandans still in subsistence agriculture at 39% down from 68% about 3-4years ago. This leap provides new questions of how we can take advantage of greater population absorption of Your Excellency's consistent message of leaving subsistence agriculture to now create more jobs and improve livelihoods using the agricultural and food value chains of commercial agriculture. As such, young people should take up the challenge of being the future of agriculture through innovative models that safeguard agricultural output in new and better ways. The youth generation today has an unlimited potential in research capacity provided by ICT infrastructure and can use this to spur the next front of agricultural advancement in Uganda. Innovative models don't always have to take the form of technology alone, sometimes communal models of land acquisition for seasoned agriculture can change the fortunes of youth who are none land owners. However, youth will generally require an understanding of the food systems to identify how many opportunities lie therein for their uptake. These range from primary producers in garden fields to middle men taking advantage of available infrastructure, like the boy from Ibanda called Tonny Ayebare who runs an online butcher because of ICT infrastructure. Youth can also innovate to support the food systems sustainability through early warning capacity enhancement and low cost needs for local farmers. In all, young people need to be met midday and have food systems and agriculture presented to them as a big answer to their needs.

In this vein, we request Your Excellency to guide major government programs like Operation Wealth Creation and NAADs to support youth leaders and community youth with skills trainings, seedlings, fertilizers and animals- for the achievement of the full transformative capacity of the sector on the youth population.

#### **D. YOUTH ECONOMIC ISSUES DURING THE PANDEMIC**

Your Excellency, even though we are performing commendably in the management of the Covid 19 Pandemic, Ugandan youth have been very large recipients of the overwhelming effects of Covid19.

1. Youth entrepreneurship and businesses are largely of Small and Medium Enterprises nature, relying on small loans, small capital and hoping for a growing market. For many of these, the business environment became much more expensive due to necessary measures to curb the spread of the pandemic. However, landlords demanded rent on return for many, government maintained taxation rates and utility costs of water and power were unfazed, this, while markets shrunk and purchasing power of the population fell low, the resultant was that SME businesses experienced major liquidity gaps. We request government to consider significant policy efforts to address the SME liquidity gaps that can support SME survival and recoveries. Through Your Excellency's intervention, access to recovery financing can be made easier and shorter for SMEs. We also request enforcement of reservation clauses in the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act to reserve contracts at local government level for such SMEs.

2. Secondly Your Excellency, Government on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, replaced the OTT tax with a direct levy of 12% on internet data, after which a Value Added tax of 18% would apply. Multiple voices of young people have indicated to us that this is still quite high and may limit their interactions with internet services, affects distance education, online business and e-commerce, as well as research. Since ICT is one of the four major sectors for job creation, we think cheaper data and Internet access can create the necessary boom in ICT innovations, development and uptake for private sector job creation. We propose a re-evaluation of the taxation just as government re-evaluated the OTT tax.

3. In addition to these Your Excellency, young people have experience another pandemic within the COVID19 pandemic. There has been a heartbreaking increase in the number of teenage pregnancies during the lockdown, these now account for 25% of all pregnancies in the country, with rural areas at 27% and 19% in urban areas according to the Ministry of Education and Sports revised guidelines for 2020.<sup>1</sup> Your Excellency, this means communities are not doing enough to pay attention to life skills necessities of young people and we run the risk of having a very high dropout rate of especially the girl child if swift interventions are not taken at community level. Many NGOs attempting to deal with this matter like the Sexual and Reproductive Health Alliance, Reach a Hand Uganda and the Aids Information Centre among others; are stretched beyond their capacities. We think government needs to disseminate quick guidelines of dealing with community management models of avoiding teenage pregnancies and managing after effects of the same.

## **E. YOUTH EMPOWERMENT**

Your Excellency, we are aware of the existence of various government initiatives to empower the youth socially, politically and economically. Various government interventions for employment creation and entrepreneurship development have been established like the Emyooga program. While these may have challenges, their impact on beneficiaries is unquestionable. However, we need to note and to bring to your attention the following;

### **i. Graduate and Urban Youth**

Your Excellency, youth from universities and other tertiary Institutions are facing unique challenges, which may not be addressed

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<sup>1</sup> Revised Guidelines for the prevention and Management of teenage pregnancies in school settings in Uganda, 2020

adequately by the existing Government interventions. It is therefore our request that a specific Government program be put in place to address graduate youth entering the labor market annually.

- ii. Your Excellency, there is need to revise, reform and revitalize the Youth Livelihood Program by incorporating the new lessons learnt in order to reach out to various youth groups. As it stands now your Excellency, the Country does not have a specific youth focused intervention since the Youth Livelihood Program recapitalization was temporarily halted. Perhaps it can be implemented at the parish level for easier reach by youth or perhaps it can be expanded.
- iii. Your Excellency, we would like to thank you for accepting increased youth participation in all Government programs from the initiation to the implementation stage. This will help identify bottlenecks in the implementation process but also raise contemporary youth concerns to government. We hope that this is kick-started soon to enable youth contribution to government be registered.

Your Excellency, District, Municipality and City Youth Councils leaderships have always had transport means to help in monitoring and mobilizing youth for government programs. However Your Excellency, with the new districts and very wrecked nature of the old motorbikes, these youth leaders are no longer able to move around their districts and they receive very low operational funds. We therefore request Your Excellency for two things in line with this matter of District and City Youth Councils.

- a) To support each of these with new motorbikes.
- b) To support increases of the conditional grants to district youth councils to increase their efficiency.

Your Excellency, the leadership of the National Youth Council pledges to work with the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, the Youth MPs under their umbrella body of the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Youth Affairs and all youth stakeholders to achieve greater youth development.

Thank you

**FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY**