

**RESTLESS  
DEVELOPMENT**  
POWERED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

# NEWSLETTER

JANUARY & FEBRUARY

2025



## TOP STORIES

- OLU-ALU campaign launch
- Leadership Team visit to West Nile
- Young Leaders' meeting in Ghana



# LEADERSHIP TEAM VISIT INSPIRES COMMUNITIES IN WESTNILE

*Our Leadership Team from January 2nd to 7th visited West Nile in Uganda, specifically to assess the progress of the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Economic Empowerment Supporting Out-of-School Adolescent Girls' Rights and Skills (SHE SOARS) project implementation in the districts of Arua, Terego and Madi Okollo.*

The visit gave the team an opportunity to witness the project's impact first hand and better appreciate its implementation.

From Social Action and Analysis (SAA) Dialogues to Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) outreaches, the team participated in various project activities centred around collecting information on SRHR in communities and villages.

"We have witnessed remarkable progress. Young people are now more confident, and the youth groups that have undergone training can now speak up and advocate for their rights with assurance," Fred Ayikobua, Madi-Okollo Youth district Councillor said during an interaction with the leadership team.

Since its launch in 2023, the SHE SOARS project has mainly contributed to improving sexual reproductive health services among adolescents.

Reports from district biostatistics confirm a significant increase in contraceptive use and HIV/STI screenings, as well as a decline in unplanned adolescent pregnancies.

The SAA dialogues have also played a key role in shifting mindsets, increasing greater acceptance of family planning services and breaking taboos around parent-child discussions on sexuality.

Joyce Dawa, a midwife



The Restless Development team with the leadership of Madi Okollo district.

## Background

**SHE SOARS is a seven-year project funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) in partnership with CARE International Uganda as the lead implementing partner and Restless Development, Reach Out Mbuya, and Naguru Teenage Health Information Centre.**

**It supports out-of-school adolescent girls who are continually left out of traditional adolescent SRHR programs. These girls are usually challenging to reach and often have the greatest need and least access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.**

at Ofaka Health Centre III in Madi-Okollo district, said that home deliveries have previously been so standard that many people see them as usual.

"Due to cultural beliefs in visiting health centres, many expectant mothers prefer to give birth at home," she said.

She also highlighted an



A girl receives a Sayana Press injection.

increase in poor health-seeking culture, where individuals often turn to herbalists as their first option whenever they fell ill.

"Unfortunately, many only seek medical care when their condition worsens, leading to preventable deaths among mothers, babies and others," Dawa explained.

However, thanks to community outreaches, more people are now receiving health education, encouraging them to seek medical care earlier. As a result, the number of deaths has now decreased according to Dawa.

"Misconceptions about

family planning have also reduced and more people are now accessing family planning services," she adds.

## SIGN OF HOPE

The leadership team was impressed by the community's excitement and response towards the BCC outreaches and other interventions.

However, the team pointed out areas that need to be addressed including limited staffing, with a small team covering a large implementation area and poor infrastructure.

The team noted that this is a hindrance to proper project implementation.

# RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT **EMPOWERS** YOUNG LEADERS FOR DIGITAL HEALTH IN GHANA

Between January 21st and 28th, young leaders in Ghana came together for an important meeting with the Ghana Community Advisory Team (CAT) under the Digital Health and Rights Programme (DHRP). The event, organised by Restless Development, focused on validating research findings focused on pushing for better digital health rights.

The training was also aimed at equipping young people with leadership skills so that they can be able speak up and take action. Through engagements and discussions, they learned how to make their voices heard and create real change in how digital health is used and managed.

A big step forward was the start of a global campaign which will bring together efforts from different

countries, making sure that young people and organisations work as a whole to demand for fair and safe digital health solutions for everyone.

## SAFE DIGITAL HEALTH

This work is part of a larger project called Breaking Barriers, Building Better Healthcare. It is a team effort by organisations such as KELIN, Privacy International, Universidad de los Andes, STOPAIDS, Andes, Restless Development and GNP+.

They are working in Colombia, Ghana, Kenya, and Vietnam to make sure digital health tools are used fairly and safely. With more people using technology in healthcare, it is important to make sure that everyone benefits. This project therefore ensures that digital health protects human rights and gives all communities access to good healthcare.



Young Leaders engaging in a group discussion.



Participants pose for a group photo after the meeting.

The Youth in West Nile are set to benefit from a new campaign designed to challenge harmful gender and social norms that have impacted the education of adolescent boys and girls across the region.

The “Olu Alu” campaign, meaning “You can - We can,” was launched by a group of adolescents aged 13 to 24 years in the districts of Moyo and Obongi in 2019. It was created to address the challenges faced by youth during the COVID-19 lock-down and is now supported by Restless Development and the Aga Khan Foundation.

Initially focused on Moyo and Obongi, the campaign has expanded to include Arua city and Yumbe district, with adolescent change agents leading efforts to address adolescent-related challenges such as early marriage, school dropout, and gender-based violence.

While launching the campaign in Arua city on January 21, 2024, Asijo Sharon, the campaign team leader from Obongi district, said the initiative seeks to ensure zero school drop-outs and no early marriages in the community.

“We want to ensure zero school drop-outs zero early marriages, and zero gender-based violence in our communities,” said Asijo Sharon.

“This campaign is focused on tackling the issues caused by early marriages, drug abuse, and school dropout.”

Justus Elema Oloto, chairperson of the Ayivu division Head Teachers’ Association and headteacher at Pokea Primary School, Arua district, called for increased parental role in the campaign.

“As parents, we have neglected our roles and

# OLU-ALU CAMPAIGN LAUNCH



Locals marching during the campaign launch in Yumbe district.



Pupils conveying messages through plays.

overlooked these children. We must work together with teachers to support and guide them,” he said.

Geoffrey Mugomba, Town Clerk for Ayivu Division, Arua district praised the initiative but reminded the community of their

responsibility to ensure its sustainability.

“It’s unfortunate that more girls drop out of school than boys. While external partners will continue to support the district, it is our role to sustain these interventions,” he said.

Joseph Afeti, deputy Mayor of Ayivu sub-county in Arua district, stressed the importance of securing a future for the youth.

“We must prioritise the education of both girls and boys. If a girl gets pregnant, we should not send her to

marry. Similarly, we should not encourage boys to abandon school to ride motorcycles,” Afeti said, urging youth leaders to report any challenges to the district authorities.

Ronald Drani, Senior Education Officer for Ayivu Division, expressed hope that the campaign would reach more areas in the district and address critical issues such as teenage pregnancies and school drop-outs.

“Education alone cannot solve these challenges. The campaign has already made a positive impact in thon curriculum implementation and reduced dropout rates, and we urge continued action to address these issues,” he said.

The campaign’s impact is growing, as it continues to challenge norms and work towards a brighter future for young people in West Nile.

*On February 13th, the Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the primary funders of the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Economic Empowerment Supporting Out-of-School Adolescent Girls' Rights and Skills (SHE SOARS) project, visited Uganda to assess the progress of the initiative.*

The visit was hosted by Reach Out Mbuya (ROM), a local implementing partner based in Kampala, and coordinated by Lynn Inang'andu, Chief of Party, along with Lillian Ssengooba, Programme Manager for the Gender Justice Programme in Uganda.

It provided meaningful space for interactions between project donors, partners and implementers.

Participants included members of the Inter-Generational Dialogue (IGD) group, Social Action and Analysis (SAA) group members, adolescent girls from Youth Savings and Loan Associations (YSLA) groups, ROM, representatives from CARE Uganda, Naguru Teenage Centre (NTC), the Youth Advisory Board (YAB), Restless Development (RD), and the Centre for Reproductive Rights (CRR), all of whom are key partners in the project.

Discussions were focused on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and its linkage to economic empowerment. The group also explored how IGD and SAA dialogues have contributed to transforming social norms that influence gender and access to sexual



Annie Njuguna (second right) from GAC and members from implementing organisations during the visit.

## SHE SOARS PROJECT DONOR VISIT UPLIFTS COMMUNITIES

and reproductive health services.

Participants also shared insights on how the project is positively impacting lives of people communities.

Banura Amanda, a YAB member, expressed gratitude for the engagement with the GAC project officers, stating that the visit was an indication of continued support to empower communities.

"We were honoured to spend time engaging with the project officers from GAC and the Canadian Youth Public Engagement Committee (YPEC) in launching a media campaign to bring young people's experiences to the forefront," Amanda said.

"We see ourselves as mirrors, reflecting the



Participants engaged in the training exercise.

realities, challenges, and aspirations of young people on the ground," she added. Richard Wanzala, a

representative from CRR, said the visit will go a long way in influencing policy change.

"It is through evidence from partners that we can advocate for policy change," Wanzala said.

During the visit, the donor team also got an opportunity to engage with individuals and locals whose lives have been transformed by the project, and are now actively leading positive change in their communities.

They also interacted with partners to gain a deeper understanding of the project's progress and its impact on young women and girls.

The SHE SOARS project remains committed to increasing the enjoyment of health-related human rights for women and girls, particularly out-of-school adolescent girls in Uganda.

From 17th to 21st February, we successfully concluded the 5-day AU-EU Youth Voices Lab — Power of the Collective continental youth-led research training in Uganda.

The program brought together 28 young researchers from 14 African countries — Zambia, South Sudan, Uganda, Tunisia, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, Cameroon, Burundi, Zimbabwe and Senegal.

The young researchers were equipped with essential research skills to inform and support advocacy priorities.

The training focused on building a strong foundation for research methods to use, data analysis, and presentation, ensuring that participants would be well-prepared to undertake meaningful research in their respective countries.

Some of the researchers who shared their experience about the training said they will utilise the knowledge acquired in addressing critical issues back in their home countries.

Djai Pascal, a researcher from Cameroon, pointed at how the training will directly influence his research work on environmental health conservation.

“This knowledge will help me better advocate for policies that protect our natural resources,” he said, emphasizing the importance of practical skills in shaping real-world change.

Ashiraf Mugalula from Uganda noted that his understanding of research methodologies had changed, particularly for addressing youth unemployment.

“This experience has given me an understanding of research methodologies, which I can now apply to address issues like youth unemployment in Uganda which is really rampant,” Mugalula said.

Paul Chacha Mahere from Tanzania said the training has empowered him to develop a more data-driven approach to education advocacy.



Participants pose for a group photo after the 5-day training.

## AU–EU YOUTH VOICES LAB EMPOWERS YOUNG RESEARCHERS ACROSS AFRICA



Group A presenting their research questions.



Participants engaging in a group discussion.

“I have learned how to collect, analyse, and present data in a way that drives change. In Tanzania, I plan to use these skills to improve access to education among many disadvantaged communities,” Fatma said.

Wien Akari from Tunisia, said the collaborative and interactive learning environment has expanded her vision for cross-continental research.

“The opportunity to work with peers from across Africa has broadened

my perspective on cross-continental research. With these new skills, I aim to support advocacy efforts for gender equality and women’s rights in Tunisia,” she said.

Yenzile Sibanda from Zimbabwe, earmarked that the training has been an eye opener for him to embark on his research focused on addressing mental health among the youth.

“In my country, we have on several occasions witnessed many suicide

cases likened to mental problems so I think I will put more focus in ensuring it is addressed,” Sibanda noted.

Sadiya Diallo from Burkina Faso, said the knowledge acquired from the training will help him in advocating for sustainable agricultural practices.

“Through the training, I’ve learned how to design and conduct impactful research.

I’m excited to bring these methods to my work on food security in Burkina Faso, helping to influence

policies that support sustainable agriculture,” he said.

Veronica Chilonga from Zambia expressed that the training has prepared her to advocate for better healthcare systems, in rural areas.

“I plan to use these new skills to advocate for better healthcare systems in the distant areas and villages of Zambia because health is a serious issue that continues to claim many lives in my country,” she added.



# STORIES CREATING IMPACTFUL CHANGE

# BCC OUTREACHES EMPOWER AMVIKO TO SUPPORT PEERS

**P**atience Amviko, is a 17-year-old girl from Pajulu sub-county in Arua district. For a long time, she felt unsure about where to turn for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. Misinformation, stigma kept her silent until she attended a Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) outreach.

"Now I have learned how to care for myself during menstruation, avoid teenage pregnancy, and protect myself from HIV/AIDS by abstaining," Amviko says as she narrates the struggles faced by other adolescents in her area.

Arua, like many other districts with limited access to SRH services and education, young girls like Amviko face financial hardships and sometimes even travel long distances to access health centres.

"My friends and I were always scared to ask questions on SRH and didn't know where to go or seek help because the health centre is so far away," she adds.

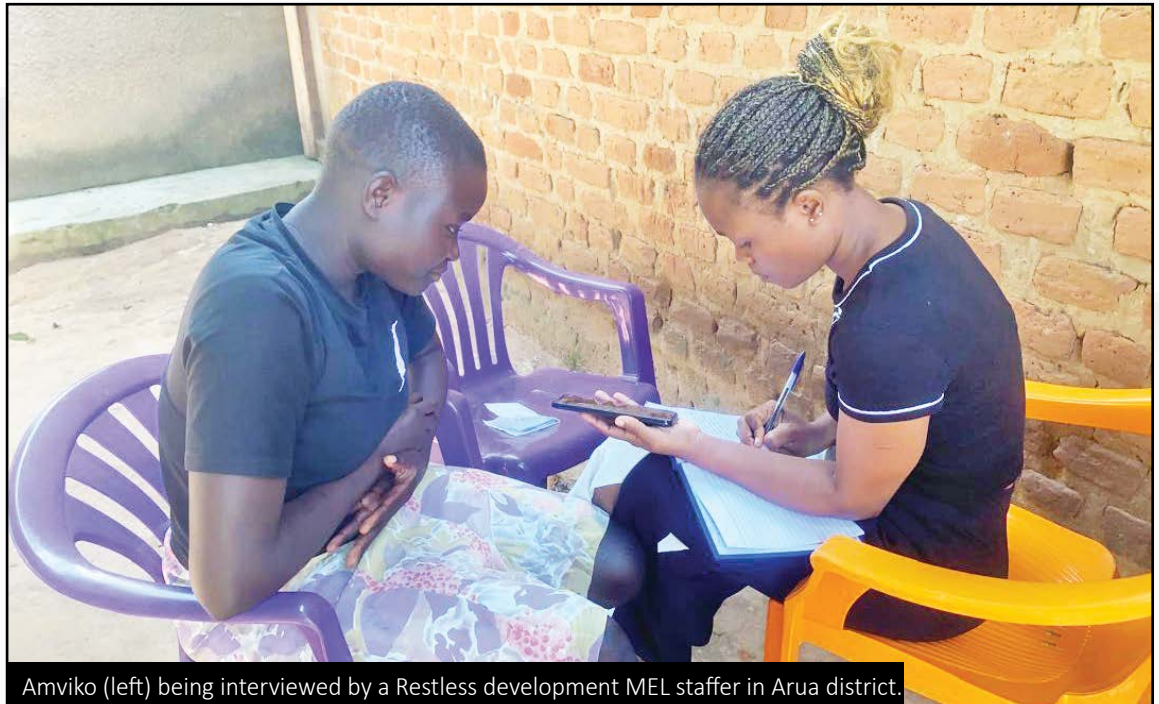
## BCC ROLE

Amviko now values the role of BCC outreaches in her community.

"My life has changed since then, thanks to the BCC outreaches held by Restless Development," she explains.

Under the SHE SOARS project, the outreach initiatives were launched to improve access to SRHR services for adolescents in poor societies located over 5km from health facilities.

The interactive and



Amviko (left) being interviewed by a Restless development MEL staffer in Arua district.

youth-friendly initiative offers a safe space for adolescents to ask questions, receive counseling and access essential health services freely.

It engages Village Health Teams (VHTs), local leaders, Youth Advisory Structure (YAS) members, and peer educators to mobilise communities and raise awareness on key topics such as teenage pregnancy, prevention of HIV/AIDS, family planning, and menstrual health management.

In 2023, Amviko attended her first outreach organised by Restless Development in Abuti village. The session among others tipped young girls on safe days, ovulation, proper use of sanitary pads and menstruation management.

"This information was very useful to me and many of my friends in the community that we keep attending different outreaches whenever we can," she adds.

## IMPACTING LIVES

Learning the hard way, Amviko now goes the extra mile in educating her peers about SRH related issues. She takes pride in seeing many out-of-school-girls transform their lives as a result of her guidance.

"One of my friends was struggling with her periods, and I showed her how to use pads properly. It feels good to help others with what I've learned," she notes, adding that the trainings have also begun to shift community perceptions, with families increasingly recognising the role of family planning.

## Stigma Challenge

**Amviko says challenges such as stigma usually arise due to lack of privacy as services are provided in open space which deters some young people from attending.**

**She urges authorities to enhance privacy, to make it easier for them to access services like condoms and HIV testing without fear.**

**"Many people even fear to go to those places because they are scared others might see them," she adds.**



## MY TRIP TO SOUTH AFRICA – RUCY

Immersed in the festive spirit of December, I was ready to take my well deserved holiday after a busy period in my new role as Resource Mobilisation Assistant at Restless Development. An email titled “Africa Career Network (ACN) On—boarding popped up my phone. I thought it was one of the usual emails from a donor, perhaps sharing feedback from a meeting or proposal. But as I read through, I quickly realised it was much more. I had been selected by my organisation to attend the ACN meeting in South Africa from 20th to 24th January 2025! I could hardly believe it. I thought these trips were reserved for the senior staff in the organisation. I read the email again and again to make sure I was reading it right. It was true. I was going to South Africa.

Now I need to give this some context, I am 26 years of age and I have just worked at Restless Development for six months. Similarly, South Africa had not been on my radar. Not even in my dreams.

The day was finally here and like a student counting down the seconds to the last bell for a long-awaited holiday, I was eager to catch my 9:00 am flight. I left my home at 6:00 am and made it to the airport on time. My excitement had built up to maximum. I couldn't wait to catch my first flight. It is one thing to imagine what an airport looks like and it is a completely different experience going through an airport. The security checks, the procedures go get your boarding pass and your

luggage checked in and so much more. Listen to me already sounding like a frequent flyer. Anyway, after completing check-ins and handing over my luggage, I was taken to the lounge. I had the opportunity to eat anything on the menu but I was too excited to eat.

At the time of boarding, an announcement was made on the sound system and the moment to board the plane had finally come. We all boarded the plane and I had a window seat. I was ready to look at everything from above the whole way. I forgot it was night time. The flight to Kenya was smooth but I admit, when the plane was taking off, there was something I felt in my stomach that I still can't explain. We landed safely in Nairobi but my excitement was slightly dampened by a delay in the flight schedule, which pushed my arrival in South Africa to much later in the evening than planned.

On arrival, I was struck by the size of Tambo International Airport. It's almost eight times larger than Entebbe Airport back home. The lights, the number of duty-free shops, and the streams of people crossing through every second were overwhelming.

As we exited the airport, I was excited to see what the city of Johannesburg had to offer. Would it live up to the hype? We arrived at night but I was amazed by the development of the transport system. I would liken the roads to the Northern Bypass and Entebbe Express Highway in Uganda: well-marked, wide, smooth, tarmacked



Rucy (third from the left) and Gabriel (left), the Restless Development Uganda Hub Director networking with colleagues in South Africa.

with multiple lanes in each direction, separated by a strip with crash barriers and flyovers. I was also impressed by the drivers' discipline on the roads. Each vehicle remained in its lane, even during slow traffic, and the remarkable aspect was that, despite the sluggish pace, we arrived quickly enough. This is unheard of in Uganda, where vehicles and motorcycles—locally known as bodas bodas—frequently cross from every direction while travelling against the flow.

We safely reached the hotel after a 45-minute journey to the Blueberry Hill Hotel in Honeydew town without a single pothole. Back home, that would be a miracle.

I woke up the next morning and the sun was already streaming through the window. Ohh my, I over slept, I thought to myself. I can't be late on day 1. To my surprise, it was only 5:30 a.m.—the sun had already fully risen! In Uganda, the sun doesn't rise until about 7:00 a.m all year round, so this was a fascinating change. It shone like it was 10:00 a.m. Relieved that I was not late, I

started getting ready for the day.

After a hearty hotel breakfast, we were picked by the very professional drivers of the Africa Leadership Academy. I didn't know that we would be having our sessions at the beautiful academy campus. (That is a story I will tell another time).

As the training began, I felt a wave of excitement. I was surrounded by people from different Africa countries such as Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Mauritius.

Seeing so many young people passionate about career growth, unity and impacting their communities was inspiring.

One of my favourite parts of the training was collaboration with people from different cultures and backgrounds.

This helped me learn unique perspectives and ideas, and how to apply them in my personal and professional life.

One conversation that stood out for me was with a young professional, Fabien De Castilla, from France, who is living in Kenya and owns a company

that provides digital skilling for young people in refugee settlement areas in Kenya, and they were expanding to the Kiryandongo district Refugee Settlement in Uganda by February 2025.

### EFFECTIVE COALITION

The training was eye opening. It went far beyond networking, we delved deep into discussions on resource mobilisation techniques and effective coalition building, which were timely as they are directly relevant to my work in resource mobilisation.

I was particularly excited to learn new strategies, and techniques of stakeholder engagement to assist me in my current role and future ventures. I was in a room of people who had vast experience and were happy to share their knowledge.

The meeting was a great learning opportunity. It reminded me that growth comes from stepping out of one's comfort zone.

I am grateful for this opportunity and excited to apply whatever I learned in my work and future endeavours so that I can have even more stories to tell.