Green Jobs and Young People in Africa: Uganda Report

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Front cover photograph: A young farmer weeding, reflecting the hands-on role of youth in nurturing sustainable farming practices in Jinja district.

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Acronyms

CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GIDJY	Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NDP	National Development Plan
NEMA	National Environment Management Authority
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UGGDS	Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

Executive summary

This research is an investigation of the aspirations and barriers experienced by Ugandan youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially women, in respect of green jobs. Specifically, it explores how opportunities in green job industries and other careers may contribute to fulfilling livelihoods and, at the same time, have a positive impact on protecting the environment and ultimately climate change.

It also explores the policy dynamics that shape how young people aged 18–35 in Jinja and Nakasongola districts, access and engage in green jobs. With youth unemployment remaining a major development challenge, the report examines how young people perceive and participate in environmental conservation and restoration work and what support systems are needed to expand their involvement in the green economy.

A youth-led, mixed-methods approach was used to ensure the perspectives of young people were central to the research. The study involved:

- 597 youth survey respondents, selected through simple random sampling
- 16 focus group discussions with 160 participants
- 12 key informant interviews with stakeholders in green employment, policy, and youth programming

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS and Excel; qualitative data were coded thematically by youth researchers using participatory approaches to uncover lived experiences and contextual insights.

Findings

Youth aspirations and motivations

- 81.6 percent of youth were not working in their dream jobs, and 74.3 percent of those in dream roles aspired to run private enterprises.
- Formal employment was often seen as inaccessible due to corruption, lack of qualifications, and social connections. Entrepreneurship offered perceived dignity, flexibility, and purpose. These findings highlight the need to invest in entrepreneurship ecosystems tailored to youth realities.

Opportunities and interest in green jobs

- 86.4 percent of youth expressed a desire to engage in green sectors, especially organic farming (51.4 percent) and recycling (34.1 percent).
- Green jobs were seen as directly relevant to youth experiences of climate impacts and economic instability, yet opportunities were often informal or poorly supported. There is a critical opportunity to formalise and expand green employment options that match youth aspirations.

Barriers and support needs

- Financial constraints (62.3 percent) and lack of education or skills (54.1 percent) were the most cited barriers, along with land inaccessibility, lack of tools, and repeated funding rejection.
- Youth from rural areas and young women faced multiple disadvantages due to mobility, family obligations, and social expectations. Unlocking youth potential requires comprehensive support, such as finance, training, mentorship, and social norm shifts.

Influence of the policy environment

- Over 75 percent of youth were aware of environmental and green economy policies, but most felt they were poorly implemented or ineffective.
- Many described receiving training without tools, or being excluded from follow-up programmes, leading to frustration and distrust. Youth-responsive policy implementation grounded in local realities and backed by resources is needed to translate awareness into access.

Innovation and local action

- Young people were already leading innovative, community-based green initiatives such as developing biodegradable products or launching agroecological networks.
- Efforts to develop green initiatives often operated in isolation, without visibility, formal support, or access to markets. Strengthening youth-led green innovation can accelerate inclusive green growth if embedded in institutional support systems.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations emerged:

- **Undertake policy reform, enforcement and incentivisation**
  - The Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development should involve young people in the formulation, review and implementation of gender-responsive policies and mentorship programmes to facilitate young women's entry into green jobs. Such policies should provide a favourable environment for investing in green jobs and related activities. These policies must also contain the necessary investment incentives to facilitate green job creation.
  - The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) should implement the National Agriculture Policy (2013) that promotes sustainable agricultural practices and ensure dedicated budget allocations for green skills training and job creation initiatives. The policy also provides a framework for the implementation of climate-smart agricultural interventions that incorporate advanced weather prediction systems, adaptive farming techniques, drought-resistant seed distribution and improved irrigation technologies to strengthen resilience and sustainability.
  - District Local Governments (DLGs) should localise green economy policies at the district level. This will enable co-designing and operationalising the

existing youth platforms to actively engage young people in local job creation and environmental policymaking.

- **Implement gender inclusive programming**
  - The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development should implement policies and programmes that address gender barriers in green employment.
- **Ensure financial inclusion and create enterprise development**
  - The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should provide youth-specific green enterprise financing (such as grants and low-interest loans) to support the activities of young people involved in green jobs.
  - Government, the private sector and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) should support the implementation of tree planting and related afforestation programmes by distributing high-quality seedlings to young people across the country. This would not only contribute to the restoration and conservation of forest cover but also play a role in combating soil erosion, enhancing biodiversity and supporting community livelihoods.
  - Government programmes such as the Parish Development Model (PDM) should provide financial support to young people and other enterprising farmers to access the required financing for engagement in green jobs and related climate adaptation and mitigation projects.
- **Expand skills training, education reform and create awareness**
  - The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development should in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports take the lead in developing targeted specific interventions to support young people in accessing green job opportunities and pursuing their career aspirations.
  - Government and other stakeholders should also expand green skills training through vocational education and apprenticeships.
  - The National Planning Authority (NPA) should provide clear indicators in the National Development Plan (NDP-IV) on the development parameters for creating green jobs for sustainable development. Such parameters should specify the required budget allocations for green jobs and climate-resilient infrastructure in the national budget.
- **Undertake further research**
  - On policy enforcement and the role of local government
  - On financing and resource access for youth-led green initiatives
  - On integration of green skills into curricula

1. Introduction and country context

The worldwide transition to sustainable development has increased the need for green jobs, allowing individuals to support environmental protection and reduce the effects of climate change. In recent years, the link between youth employment and environmental sustainability has gained immense importance (Aceleanu 2015). With climate change presenting ongoing challenges, the need for green jobs is on the rise, as they are essential for environmental conservation and sustainable growth.

Young people are at the forefront of addressing the adverse effects of climate change while generating multiple job opportunities for a growing population. Across Africa and especially in Uganda a shift to a green economy offers a powerful pathway to both adapt to environmental challenges and create sustainable employment (Chukwu 2020). The shift towards a sustainable economy has resulted in the rise of green jobs, which are roles dedicated to preserving or restoring the environment (Gironde and Carbonnier 2019). Consequently, young individuals are increasingly attracted to these positions, motivated by a wish to align their careers with their values and take part in climate action (Mann and Chang 2024). As a major demographic, youth demonstrate growing interest in careers that reflect their principles and promote a sustainable future.

This research investigated the unheard young people's experiences and viewpoints on how the pandemic and climate change have affected their lives, especially concerning their pursuit of green jobs. It explored the aspirations, obstacles, negotiations, work experiences and opportunities young people face in pursuing green jobs. It also reflects on how green jobs influence environmental sustainability, climate issues, education, training, opportunities, job security, work-life balance, wages, and benefits.

The Ugandan government acknowledges the promise of green jobs in tackling environmental issues and alleviating poverty. The Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy (2017-2030) (FAO 2018) targets the creation of more than 4 million green jobs by 2030. However, young people continue to face challenges due to the economic recession and limited opportunities.

Understanding young people's perspectives on work and green jobs in Uganda is essential to identify the obstacles as well as develop strategies to support their aspirations to enter the green job market. This research involved young researchers who, through a collaborative approach with youth, amplified the voices of marginalised groups, such as young mothers, individuals with disabilities, and young people from rural areas.

Uganda, like other African nations, is working to tackle youth unemployment and generate green jobs to foster sustainable economic growth. With over 78 percent of its population under 30 years old (BTI 2024) the country faces a notable challenge in youth unemployment, which affects about 13.3 percent of individuals aged 15-24 and 8.3 percent of those aged 25-29.

In recent years, the government has proactively promoted green jobs by creating policies and strategies aimed at both environmental sustainability and economic growth. The National Development Plan (NDP III) (National Planning Authority 2020) emphasises green growth and climate adaptation, highlighting their importance for sustainable development. In addition, Uganda has implemented the Green Growth Development Strategy to foster decent, sustainable jobs while enhancing environmental protection. The government is also

prioritizing the development of renewable energy, particularly hydropower and solar energy (FAO 2018). The Renewable Energy Policy for Uganda targets 61 percent of electricity generation from renewable sources by 2017, a significant increase from the previous 4 percent. However, despite these efforts, challenges persist in promoting green jobs and youth employment in Uganda. Key barriers include limited access to financing, a shortage of skills and training, and insufficient opportunities for young people in rural areas.

Furthermore, there is a pressing need to foster sustainable green employment for the youth, especially as more than 200 million students are currently enrolled in higher education, a number projected to double by 2030 (Nishimura and Rowe 2020). This growing pool of graduates underscores the urgency of creating inclusive and future-ready job opportunities that align with emerging green economy demands. Yet, 71 million young people remain unemployed and face difficulties securing meaningful work. Transitioning to a green economy is anticipated to generate around 60 million new jobs by 2030. According to the ILO, *'the green transition can generate millions of jobs, but these are conditional on the availability of relevant skills and training*' (ILO 2019, . Thus, this shift can contribute to addressing youth unemployment while creating fairer and more inclusive job opportunities.

This research is an investigation of the aspirations and barriers experienced by Ugandan youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially women, regarding green jobs. Specifically, it explores how opportunities in green jobs may contribute to fulfilling livelihoods and, at the same time, have a positive impact on protecting the environment and ultimately climate change. Specifically, it aims:

- To describe the specific career aspirations and underlying motivations that influence young people aged 18-35 to enter and seek green jobs in Jinja and Nakasongola districts.
- To explore opportunities available for young people in environmental preservation and restoration (green jobs) in Jinja and Nakasongola districts.
- To assess the barriers faced by young people in their pursuit of green jobs and identify the support they need to achieve their aspirations in Jinja and Nakasongola districts.
- To examine how the policy environment at local, national, and international levels influences young people's access to green job opportunities in Jinja and Nakasongola districts.

2. Research design and methodology

This section describes the methodology employed in the study, covering the design, sample size, sampling procedures, and ethical considerations taken to ensure quality control while using the youth-led methodology. It also outlines the data collection methods and tools used, as well as the data analysis approach.

Youth-led research methodology

This research employed Restless Development's youth-led methodology, engaging young individuals as essential participants in the research process. Our approach comprised the following elements, as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Youth-led research methodology

Source: Restless Development: (https://restlessdevelopment.org/youth-led-research/)

This method stands out because both staff and youth researchers had well-defined roles that enhanced youth leadership. Sixteen youth researchers received training in both quantitative and qualitative research techniques, with their feedback shaping the research tools. They took charge of data collection through surveys, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews, ensuring that the opinions and priorities of their peers remained central to the study. This strategy enabled youth researchers to pose questions reflecting their priorities, build a stronger rapport with interviewees during data collection, and yield deeper insights into the barriers, motivations, and opportunities concerning environmental conservation and green jobs. Additionally, the youth researchers engaged in a participatory analysis workshop where they transcribed data, performed thematic analysis, and pinpointed essential patterns and themes.

Research design

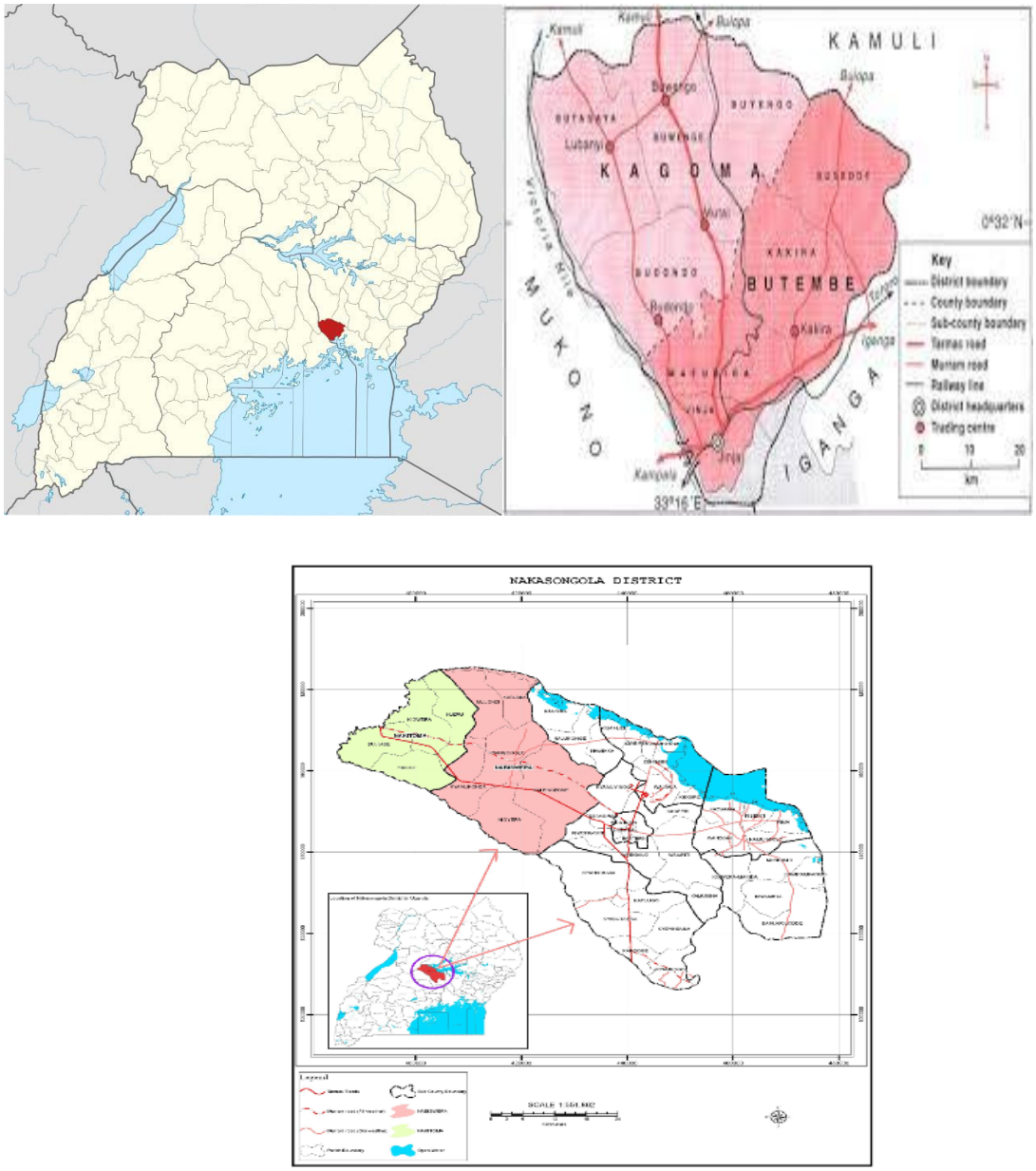
This study employed a cross-sectional mixed methods design aimed at understanding the elements influencing youth involvement in green jobs and environmental conservation. By utilising a cross-sectional approach, data was collected at a specific moment, reflecting the current socio-economic and environmental contexts of the study regions. The investigation was rooted in the Restless Youth-led research model, empowering young researchers to take charge throughout the research process, while receiving guidance and support from staff to maintain rigour and inclusivity.

Study area

The research was conducted in Jinja and Nakasongola districts, each presenting distinct socio-economic and environmental conditions. Jinja district, situated in the Eastern region, is known for its agricultural and industrial activities, making it an important location for

examining youth involvement in green jobs within a relatively developed context. In contrast, Nakasongola district, located in central Uganda, is marked by semi-arid conditions and a focus on livestock rearing, offering differing insights into the barriers and opportunities for environmental conservation. Collectively, these districts illustrate the various challenges and potential approaches to enhancing participation in green jobs across diverse environmental and economic landscapes (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Map of Uganda showing the geographical study sites



Source: Google images

Target population

The research focused on individuals aged 18 to 30, a group seen as active participants in the workforce and essential to environmental conservation. Representation was balanced between genders, with a greater number of female respondents involved in agricultural

work, whereas male respondents were predominantly found in boda-boda riding. The study also included marginalised groups, like those with visual impairments, who encountered considerable obstacles in engaging with conservation programmes.

Quantitative sampling

A statistically significant sample of 656 respondents was selected using the Kish (2014) formula for sample size determination. This ensured robust representation across demographic groups.

In calculating the quantitative sample, we used Kish Leslie 2014 formula for all the respondents (18-30 years) where, $\frac{N=p(1-p)\,Z^2}{d^2} = \frac{0.5x0.5x1.96^2}{0.049^2} = 400$

For Jinja district, the assumption was that the young people involved in green jobs was 50 percent. Where, N = number of respondents needed, p = estimated proportion of people on green jobs. In this study, Z is 1.96 (the Z score corresponding to 95 percent confidence interval), d = maximum error the researcher is willing to allow (margin of error) = 4.90 percent.

For Nakasongola district, the assumption was that 20 percent of the young people (aged 18-30) were engaged in green jobs because it is rural and sparsely populated. The same formula was used as follows:

We used Kish Leslie 2014 formula for all the respondents (18-30 years) where,

$$\frac{N=p(1-p)\,Z^2}{d^2} = \frac{\mathbf{0.8\times0.2\times1.96^2}}{0.049^2} = \mathbf{256}$$

The total survey sample for the study was therefore supposed to be 656 respondents. However, due to non-response, we obtained 597 responses (indicating a response rate of 91 per cent).

Sampling criteria

After obtaining the sample size, we went to the four villages selected in both Jinja and Nakasongola district visited. In each village, we asked the village chairperson for a list of all young people (18-30) to construct a sampling frame. In areas where the lists were not available, they were constructed in consultation with the local leaders. In Jinja district, a list of 100 names was identified by simple random selection (lottery method). The process was repeated in the four villages in Nakasongola district where 64 names were selected from each village.

Qualitative sampling

Twelve key informants were purposively selected, with six from each district. Additionally, 16 focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with 8 in each district. These FGDs

included both women-only and mixed-gender groups to ensure that women's views were not overshadowed. See Table 1 below for details of the sample.

Table 1: Sampling methods and sample size

Participant group	Sampling method	Tool	Sample size (n)	Gender (M/F)	Age range	Education level	Location
Young people	Simple random	Survey	597	316/281	18–21:17.4% 22–25:27.8% 26–30:38.9% 31–35:15.9%	Primary: 172 Secondary: 329 Tertiary: 28 Degree: 38	70% Rural 30% Urban
District and local stakeholders	Purposive	KII	12	7/5	-	-	60% Rural 40% Urban
Young people	Purposive	FGD	16 (8 per district)	83/77[1]	18–21= 9.7% 22–25=20.0% 26–30= 55.2 31–35= 15.2	-	80% Rural 20% Urban

Data collection

The research team collected data using three primary methods including:

Survey

Structured interviews were conducted with a total of 608 young people aged 18 to 35 years. The questionnaire captured quantitative data on their socio-economic characteristics, educational backgrounds, livelihood activities, aspirations, and involvement in environmental conservation. It also explored barriers to engaging in green jobs, their motivations, and their perspectives on environmental changes within their communities.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 key informants, including government officials, cultural and religious leaders, and representatives from Community-Based Organizations focused on climate change, employment, and gender. The KIIs offered critical insights into institutional policies, observed environmental changes, barriers to youth engagement in green jobs, and recommendations for aligning youth aspirations with community and national priorities.

[1] Whereas the number of FGDs was 16, the number of participants in each of the groups varied from 7-12 individuals. This explains the variations in the gender summary of the FGD participants.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

A total of 16 FGDs were conducted (8 in each district), involving young people aged 18 to 30. These discussions were divided into female youth and male youth to ensure inclusivity and representation of diverse perspectives. The FGDs aimed to understand young people's challenges and aspirations regarding green jobs, their participation in environmental conservation, and their proposed solutions to the barriers they face.

Data analysis

The data analysis process involved both quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure a comprehensive interpretation of the findings.

Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data from the surveys were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to identify trends, frequencies, and patterns among the respondents. Descriptive statistics summarised socio-economic characteristics, barriers, and motivations related to green jobs and environmental conservation. Findings were presented in tables, charts, and graphs to clearly represent the data.

During the quantitative analysis process, it was observed that the study respondents gave multiple responses. This explains why some tables such as Figure 17 add up to more than 100 percent.

Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative data gathered from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) was subjected to participatory and thematic analysis. Youth researchers who participated in the study engaged in a participatory analysis workshop. In this workshop, they completed the transcription of the data, while staff assisted with quality control and support. Afterwards, they performed a preliminary deductive thematic analysis to identify broad themes, which were subsequently refined into specific findings. The data was coded, transcribed, and reviewed based on predetermined key codes aligned with primary and secondary research questions. Additionally, the researchers examined the coded data to uncover emerging patterns that shaped the themes. These themes were verified against the dataset to ensure they were rooted in the data and supported by the primary findings. Ultimately, evidence-based themes were interconnected and described in detail to offer a nuanced understanding of the qualitative data. This thorough analytical process guaranteed that the findings were reliable and firmly anchored in the collected data.

Youth researchers facilitate a focus group discussion in Nakasongola district to gather community perspectives on green jobs and young people.

Data validation

The research utilised a data-driven approach that emphasised accuracy and inclusivity. Following the data collection, initial findings were presented to young individuals and stakeholders in Jinja and Nakasongola districts, where the research was conducted. This step allowed both groups to examine and question the findings, ensuring the report genuinely represented their views and experiences. Young people and stakeholders offered feedback on any inconsistencies, facilitating adjustments to better reflect the realities conveyed during data collection. Moreover, this process enhanced transparency by clarifying how respondents' contributions were applied. It also provided a space for them to offer additional explanations, share new insights, and discuss emerging inquiries from the analysis phase. This collaborative validation guaranteed that the final findings were accurate, representative, and aligned with community and stakeholder priorities.

Youth moderate a validation meeting in Jinja district, sharing insights to strengthen findings on green jobs and young people.

Conversations for action

Conversations for action play a critical role in all research projects undertaken by Restless Development, guaranteeing that results shape and steer impactful decisions. From the outset the use of the findings is considered, taking discussions beyond a sharing exercise to encourage significant dialogue in decision-making arenas. In this study, research outcomes were shared at the community, district, national, and international levels, sparking discussions that will hopefully lead to action.

Ethical Considerations

The study identified the following ethical considerations before conducting interviews with all target respondents:

Informed consent

The study utilised stratified and simple random sampling to ensure a representative and unbiased selection of participants. Before initiating the research process, informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Participants were provided with a brief yet comprehensive statement outlining the purpose of the study, the estimated duration, and the procedures involved. Special attention was given to individuals with disabilities to ensure they could provide informed consent. In cases of severe disability, a witness or assistant supported respondents during the consent process to ensure understanding and voluntary participation.

Confidentiality

The study implemented thorough measures to secure respondents' data, especially considering the sensitive nature of sampling and interviewing of vulnerable groups. All records were stored in password-protected files, and encryption was applied to any data shared electronically. Moreover, data collection and reporting methods were structured to prevent the disclosure of information that could compromise participants' safety or well-being.

Anonymity

To protect participants' identities, personal identifiers were removed or altered in all reports and publications stemming from the research. Respondents were assigned unique codes or pseudonyms during the data analysis and reporting phases. This ensured that individual responses could not be traced, thereby preserving their privacy and confidentiality throughout the study.

Review and approval of research proposal

The Makerere University School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, along with the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology Research Ethics Committee (REC), reviewed and approved the research protocol that incorporated a hybrid sampling strategy. Their endorsement affirmed that the study complied with ethical standards, particularly regarding impartial sampling methods. This approval established a strong basis for conducting the study responsibly in the field.

Furthermore, participants were made aware of their rights, which included the option to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without concerns about personal or organisational consequences. All participants provided written consent prior to starting the interviews.

Study limitations

Narrow representation of youth viewpoints

Although the study involved youth from Jinja and Nakasongola districts, the results may not fully capture the varied experiences and challenges faced by young people in other areas of Uganda, especially in distinct socio-economic and cultural settings. To address this issue, the research team collaborated with multiple local community organisations and youth groups in these districts, ensuring participation from individuals of different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, thereby enhancing the data gathered and reflecting a wider spectrum of youth perspectives.

Challenges in gaining thorough qualitative insights

While we conducted focus groups and interviews with key informants, some youth and stakeholders might have felt hesitant to openly discuss sensitive topics due to the group environment or perceived power imbalances. To overcome this issue, we complemented group discussions with private individual interviews, creating a more confidential atmosphere that encouraged unrestricted sharing of sensitive information.

Challenges in geographical accessibility

In the Nakasongola district, geographical distances, coupled with insufficient infrastructure like poorly maintained roads, create substantial barriers to accessing target locations. This

situation impeded data collection efforts in remote areas and likely limited the breadth of study findings from those difficult-to-access regions.

To overcome this challenge, the research team partnered with local community members, utilising their insights and networks to reach these remote areas, which helped enhance data collection and broaden the range of perspectives included, despite the geographic difficulties.

Grasping young people's views on work and green jobs in Uganda is vital for pinpointing their challenges and formulating strategies to aid their ambitions. Utilising a collaborative youth approach, the research worked alongside young researchers to co-create the design and tools, amplifying the voices of underserved groups, such as young mothers, individuals with disabilities, and youth from rural areas.

Overall, understanding young people's views on work and green jobs in Uganda is vital for pinpointing their challenges and formulating strategies to aid their ambitions. Utilizing a collaborative youth approach, the research worked alongside young researchers to co-create the design and tools, amplifying the voices of underserved groups, such as young mothers, individuals with disabilities, and youth from rural areas.

3. Literature review

This section analyses the pertinent literature, policies, and studies that inform this research, ensuring a thorough grasp of the essential concepts, trends, and advancements concerning green jobs and youth employment. It critically assesses current research, reveals knowledge gaps, and emphasises how policies influence opportunities for young people within the green economy.

Definition of green jobs

The idea of green jobs was introduced via the Green Jobs Initiative, a collaboration spearheaded by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Trade Union Confederation and the International Organisation of Employers initiated in 2008, this initiative seeks to foster equitable employment that facilitates a shift towards sustainable economies by merging environmental safeguarding with social and economic progress.

As stated by UNEP and ILO, green jobs represent decent work that supports the preservation or restoration of environmental quality (ILO 2021). These roles span various sectors, including agriculture, industry, services, and administration. They emphasise efforts to decrease energy and raw material consumption, reduce pollution and waste, safeguard ecosystems, and facilitate adaptation to climate change.

Green jobs are generally defined in two main categories: first, as roles that actively generate environmentally sustainable products, like organic farming, waste recycling, and eco-friendly construction; and second, as jobs that enhance the environmental friendliness of production processes, such as positions focused on cleaner industrial methods and energy efficiency. Crucially, a job qualifies as green only if it also adheres to decent work standards, which encompass fair wages, workplace rights, social protection, and dialogue within the community.

Numerous scholars and organisations have offered detailed definitions of green jobs, underscoring their importance for both the environment and the economy (Al-Ammarat and Al Mashaqaba 2022). Green jobs span traditional sectors like construction and

manufacturing, as well as new green industries such as renewable energy and energy efficiency. The primary purpose of these roles is to mitigate environmental impacts, especially in critical areas such as energy, transportation, agriculture, and waste recycling. Additionally, green jobs are characterised by their dual benefits, such as enhancing the environment, while also fostering sustainability through energy efficiency, resource conservation, and reliance on renewable resources. Many definitions stress that green jobs aim to combat environmental issues, including ecosystem restoration, economic decarbonisation, and pollution prevention.

While there is growing interest, there is no universally accepted definition of green jobs, as various institutions and disciplines have differing interpretations. However, there is consensus that green jobs are crucial for attaining environmental sustainability, economic development, and social equity, which are key elements of the wider green economy agenda.

The case for green jobs

The argument for green jobs underscores their twin functions in tackling environmental issues and fostering sustainable employment. These positions are increasingly viewed as a mechanism to combat climate change, environmental harm, and poverty, while simultaneously ensuring decent work and advancing social equity. They mitigate environmental effects by saving energy and raw materials, reducing emissions, restoring ecosystems, and enhancing human health. It is noted that green jobs draw individuals from underprivileged communities through skills development, promote rural progress, and assist vulnerable groups, particularly women and youth, in escaping poverty (Nasira and Thabeti 2016). They provide long-term job prospects in burgeoning fields like renewable energy and energy efficiency, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and improve environmental standards in agriculture, forestry, and other sectors. Furthermore, green jobs promote economic growth through high labour intensity and varied supply chains, while broadening educational and training opportunities. Since a significant proportion of the youth, especially in developing nations, work in sectors susceptible to climate change, green jobs offer a vital alternative for sustainable livelihoods and inclusive growth.

Challenges of engaging in green jobs.

Pursuing green jobs involves various challenges, starting with the need to shift traditional business mindsets. During economically uncertain times, companies, regardless of size, often shy away from green initiatives that might appear risky or labour-intensive, diverging from contemporary practices focused on reducing labour and expenditures (Renner, Sweeney and Kubit 2008). One major obstacle is the insufficient educational infrastructure for green industries, which restricts the supply of well-trained workers in specific regions and sectors. In addition, limited labour demand and mobility hinder the growth of green jobs, since these sectors tend to be small, widely distributed, and reliant on local resources. Consequently, the job opportunities they offer are often less clear and harder to adapt across different regions. Numerous challenges, such as insufficient regulations, significant capital expenses, technical limitations, restricted market access, and a pervasive lack of information regarding green technologies and funding options, further impede the advancement of green industries.

As economies shift towards sustainability, the creation of green jobs is expected to rise, though it may cause disruptions. Certain sectors and employees particularly those in fossil

fuels or traditional heavy industries might experience economic difficulties and job losses, while those involved in green innovation, design, and technology stand to gain (Renner, Sweeney and Kubit 2008). To address these imbalances, public policy must work proactively to reduce the gaps between emerging winners and the potential losers in the green economy. Employment will also see structural changes: some positions will be replaced (e.g., fossil fuel jobs transitioning to renewable energy), some will vanish (e.g., positions tied to banned packaging materials), and new roles will be developed in green sectors. Young people face extra hurdles because many green industries demand skills and education that are often out of reach for them, while sectors that are more accessible, like agriculture and construction, tend to be regarded as undesirable or unprofitable (IFAD 2016). Overcoming these challenges require focused investments in education, skills training, and inclusive policy development to ensure fair access to opportunities in the green economy.

Making green jobs more attractive for young people

To attract young people to green jobs, it is crucial to implement integrated, youth-focused strategies across education, industrial policies, and rural development (Zabin 2020). These jobs must provide decent wages, safe working environments, opportunities for career growth, and meaningful participation in green economy policymaking (Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth (GIDJY) 2017). Successful implementation depends on strong cooperation among government, the private sector, and civil society, with active youth involvement in design, execution, and evaluation of programmes. Green jobs should allow young individuals to utilise existing skills, learn new ones, and secure fulfilling employment, particularly given the significant proportion of youth working in informal and hazardous conditions. As highlighted by studies reviewed by Renner, Sweeney and Kubit (2008), a job cannot qualify as green if it is exploitative or unsafe, even if it contributes to environmental objectives. This necessitates systemic measures to promote and safeguard the rights of young workers, transforming green employment into dignified, sustainable careers.

The Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth (GIDJY 2017) presents a change theory aimed at enhancing youth employment in the green economy through various coordinated actions. These actions include identifying market constraints, performing sector analyses, and developing country-specific policies and investment proposals. The initiative stresses the importance of promoting employment-intensive green growth, developing public-private partnerships, and enhancing technical support and policy coherence. A vital aspect is demand-driven skills development, achieved by executing skills gap surveys, aligning vocational training with market demands, and incorporating green skills into educational systems. It also recommends certification schemes and collaboration with national training institutions to ensure quality and relevance. While this serves as one intervention model, GIDJY acknowledges that various strategies can be employed to create meaningful and sustainable green job opportunities for young people.

The role of government in promoting green jobs for young people

Governments are essential in unlocking the job creation potential of the green economy, particularly for young individuals. In numerous countries, this potential is still not fully utilised, making it crucial for governments and partners to focus on investments in green sectors, technologies, and workforce training (Van der Ree, and Nebuloni n.d.). However, moving towards a greener economy does not guarantee quality jobs for youth; it necessitates intentional efforts, either through exclusive promotion of green jobs or by incorporating them into current programmes. A significant government obligation is to

cultivate a skilled workforce prepared for green industries. ILO indicate that employment will evolve in four main ways: new opportunities will arise in renewable energy and pollution management; greener options will supplant traditional jobs; some positions will be entirely eliminated; and many existing roles will change as green technologies are embraced (ILO 2021). This highlights the importance of strategic planning, inclusive policies, and collaborative initiatives to enable young people to effectively participate in and gain from the green transition.

Green jobs and environmental impacts

Green jobs are defined as positions that generate products or services that benefit the environment or use fewer natural resources, ranging from basic resource selection to intricate product development (Mwaura and Glover 2021). The key idea is that eventually, all jobs need to evolve to become greener in order to foster global environmental sustainability. Green jobs not only facilitate climate initiatives but also foster adaptation and mitigation strategies in addressing climate change, which remains the primary threat to sustainable development in the 21st century (Nasira and Thabeti 2016). By integrating environmental objectives with poverty alleviation through the creation of decent employment, green jobs address both ecological deterioration and socio-economic disparity, ensuring environmental protection and labour market stability (Poschen 2014). They play a crucial role in advancing toward a low-carbon economy by reducing harmful emissions and promoting sustainable production and consumption habits (Okijie, Effiong and Iriabije 2023). In addition, the green transition affects labour markets in various ways, creating both challenges and new job opportunities, especially for young people, as economies move toward environmentally sustainable practices.

Green jobs and youth employment

Youth unemployment continues to be a significant global issue, with forecasts indicating that by 2030, up to 25 million individuals aged 15 to 29 will be entering the job market in search of work (Okijie, Effiong and Iriabije 2023). While the international unemployment rate remains stable, the pace of job creation lags behind the growing workforce, leaving young people at higher risk. In this scenario, the green economy offers a valuable opportunity for job growth. As nations shift towards low-carbon, climate-resilient practices to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, green sectors, particularly clean and renewable energy, have the capacity to create numerous employment opportunities. The ILO's 2018 World Economic and Social Outlook highlighted a potential global net increase of 18 million jobs through a transition to clean energy by 2030 (Mwaura and Glover 2021). Furthermore, green jobs can provide a strategic response to poverty and environmental deterioration, particularly for the 70 percent of the global population who live on less than two dollars a day and rely on natural resources for their livelihoods (UNEP 2022).

The global transition towards sustainable production and consumption is creating job opportunities in sectors such as renewable energy, construction, environmental conservation, and ecotourism. These green jobs can help reduce poverty and unemployment, particularly in rural regions, by supporting sustainable livelihoods and managing natural resources (Edenhofer et al. 2014). However, to fully realise this potential, initiatives for green jobs must focus on protecting and empowering young workers in industries vulnerable to environmental changes or regulatory challenges. This necessitates coordinated efforts across multiple sectors to ensure green industries are appealing and

accessible to youth, especially those who are low- or semi-skilled and live in rural and/or informal environments. Industries that emit high greenhouse gases, including energy, agriculture, forestry, and transport, present significant opportunities for youth employment when integrated with climate adaptation and mitigation plans (Bala 2023). When approached inclusively, green growth can uniquely meet the employment demands of young people while promoting climate resilience and long-term sustainability.

Green jobs and gender

Women are capable of thriving in all green jobs across the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors, challenging old beliefs that physical demands limit their involvement, especially as automation has lessened these requirements (Bhatta 2017; ILO 2015). Opportunities in the green economy, particularly in higher-paying non-traditional roles where women are often absent, can promote gender equity in the workplace. Recent global initiatives, such as the Stockholm Conference organised by ILO, UNEP, and UNICEF, have stressed the significance of a just transition towards a low-carbon and circular economy. They advocate for inclusive social dialogue that empowers women, youth, and those without access to higher education or vocational training (Elder and Kring 2016). Achieving gender equality in green jobs necessitates sex-disaggregated data and acknowledgment of the double disadvantage experienced by young women in labour markets (UNDP 2015).

As climate change impacts worsen existing gender disparities, employing gender-responsive planning and policies is crucial to creating inclusive and equitable green economies (UN Women 2025). The connection between climate change and youth unemployment requires a comprehensive approach, where green economies become transformative pathways for sustainable development, job creation, and social equity. This transition, backed by investments in sustainable infrastructure and driven by youth-led environmental initiatives, offers a distinct chance to transform the employment landscape (ILO 2022).

Green jobs and policy

Like many other countries, Uganda is increasingly acknowledging the possibilities of green jobs to tackle environmental issues and youth unemployment. Various policies have been introduced to foster green jobs and encourage young people to engage in this expanding sector, including:

National Employment Policy (2012): This policy acknowledges the significance of green jobs in fostering decent employment and advancing sustainable development. It highlights the necessity of establishing training programmes for green skills and creating a supportive landscape for green businesses (Government of Uganda 2012).

National Climate Change Policy (2013): This policy recognises green jobs as a vital approach for addressing and adapting to climate change. It details initiatives to be implemented, including the promotion of renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and resilient infrastructure for climate challenges (Ministry of Water and Environment 2013).

Sector-Specific Policies: Renewable Energy Policy (2007): This policy seeks to boost the adoption of renewable energy sources in Uganda. It encompasses training and capacity-building components within the renewable energy sector, providing advantages to youth aiming for green employment opportunities (Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development 2007).

National Agriculture Policy (2013): This policy supports sustainable farming methods that have the potential to generate green jobs in fields like organic farming, agroforestry, and climate-smart agriculture (Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries 2013).

The Uganda Forestry Policy (2006): This policy focuses on the conservation and management of Uganda's forests. It features provisions that promote community-based forestry initiatives, potentially generating green jobs in fields like tree planting, forest management, and non-timber forest products (Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment 2001).

Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy (UGGDS): This strategy directs Uganda's shift towards a low-emission, climate-resilient, and inclusive economy by fostering sustainable development in five key areas: agriculture, natural capital, sustainable cities, transportation, and energy. Its objectives include boosting economic growth, generating decent green jobs, and aligning with Uganda's Vision 2040 and National Development Plans (Government of Uganda 2017).

In conclusion, the literature highlights that green jobs are essential for fostering a sustainable and inclusive future by merging environmental conservation with quality employment. These roles encompass both traditional and emerging sectors like agriculture, energy, construction, and waste management, aiding in climate change mitigation, poverty alleviation, and economic growth. Although there is no universally accepted definition, it is widely agreed that green jobs should blend environmental accountability with equitable labour standards. In addition, green jobs present distinct opportunities to reshape labour markets and advance social equity, especially when focused on vulnerable groups such as youth and women. Nevertheless, their potential is limited by several challenges, including inadequate educational infrastructure, low awareness, barriers to labour mobility, and insufficient cohesive policies and institutional support (Government of Uganda 2017).

To tackle these challenges effectively, coordinated efforts from governments, civil society, and the private sector are essential to enhance education, policy coherence, and investments in green sectors. Governments are crucial in fostering supportive environments through policy frameworks such as Uganda's Green Growth Development Strategy, National Climate Change Policy, and various sectoral initiatives in agriculture, energy, and forestry. For green jobs to have a transformative impact, they must be appealing, accessible, and equitable, especially for youth and women, who often encounter multiple obstacles in the job market. With strategic planning and inclusive policy execution, green jobs can address unemployment, combat environmental degradation, and reduce social inequality, establishing them as a fundamental aspect of sustainable development and climate resilience.

4. Findings

The findings are structured to systematically respond to each research question while aligning with the study's objectives. This section comprises three subsections. First, it investigates the career aspirations and motivations of youth in Jinja and Nakasongola districts, offering an overview of their primary livelihood sources, work and educational ambitions, and their initiatives to preserve, conserve, and restore the environment. Next, it investigates the obstacles they encounter in accessing green job opportunities and highlights the support necessary to navigate these challenges. Lastly, the section evaluates the impact of local, national, and international policies on young people's access to green

job openings. It begins with an overview of the respondents' response rate and demographic characteristics, followed by a thorough presentation of the findings corresponding to each objective.

Response rate

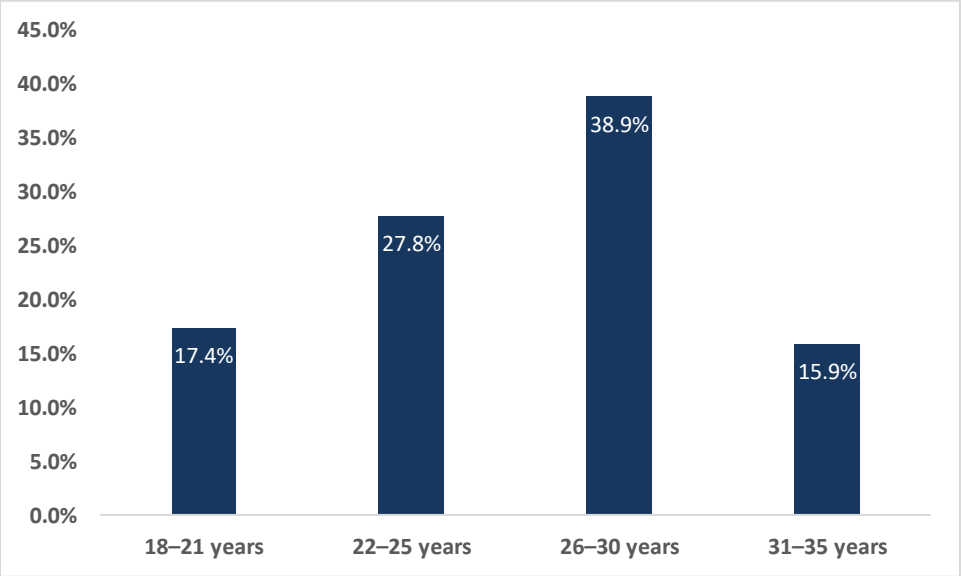
The research was carried out in Jinja and Nakasongola districts, focusing on individuals aged 18 to 35. The methodology was highly inclusive, ensuring representation from all targeted demographic groups. This extensive involvement resulted in a 91 percent response rate (597 of 656). This high participation may reflect both the relevance of the research topic to local youth and their willingness to engage in dialogues around livelihood challenges and opportunities. Significantly, the district distribution showed that Jinja, situated in the mid-eastern sub-region, had 331 participants, accounting for approximately 55.4 percent of the overall sample. In contrast, Nakasongola provided 266 respondents, representing around 44.6 percent. This uneven distribution is noteworthy because Jinja is more urbanised and economically diverse, while Nakasongola is predominantly rural, potentially shaping distinct livelihood profiles and barriers for young people. The contrast between these districts sets the stage for exploring how location influences access to employment, financial services, and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Social economic and demographic characteristics of respondents

Age distribution

Figure 3 indicates that most respondents fall within the 26 to 30 age range, making up about 38.9 percent (232) of the total sample. The second-largest group is those aged 22 to 25 years, at approximately 27.8 percent (166), followed by those aged 18 to 21 which constitutes around 17.4 percent (104). Lastly, respondents aged 31 to 35 years represent about 15.9 percent (95).

Figure 3: Age distribution of respondents



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

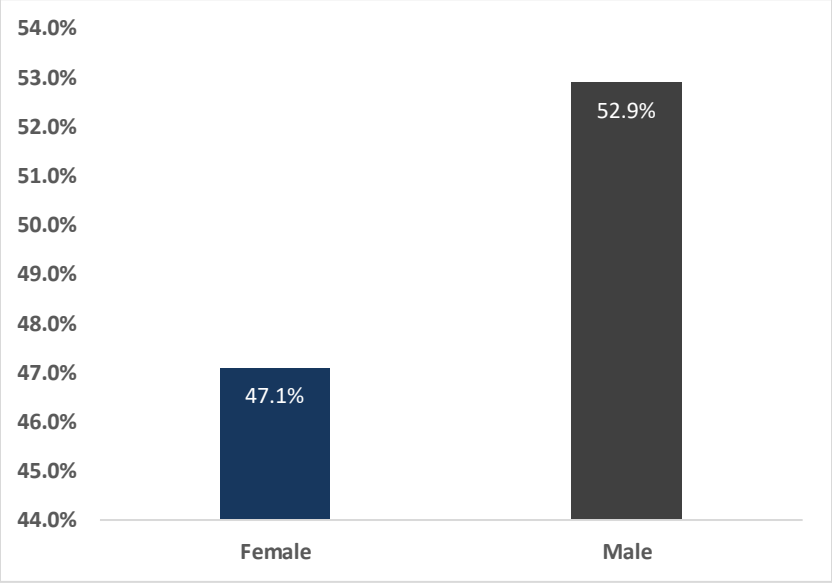
This distribution shows that young people in their mid-to-late twenties were the most common age group in the survey, suggesting that this younger demographic was either

more engaged or more easily reached in this study's context. This concentration in the 26-30 age group is particularly significant, as it represents a critical transitional phase where youth are likely moving from education into the labour market or entrepreneurship. Their responses may therefore reflect the most accurate experiences with employment barriers, financial access, or livelihood decisions offering valuable insight into the systemic issues affecting young adults in the region. Moreover, the lower participation of the youngest group (18–21) may suggest barriers to civic engagement or less integration into economic activities. It may also indicate that many in this age bracket are still in school or training, which could limit their involvement in employment and influence their perspectives on livelihood opportunities. These possibilities highlight the need for targeted outreach and strategies that consider the educational status and economic readiness of younger youth in future interventions.

Gender disaggregation of respondents

The data indicate that most respondents in the study were male, comprising 52.9 percent (316) of the total sample. Conversely, female respondents made up 47.1 percent (281) of the participants. Figure 4 illustrates that the gender distribution was relatively balanced.

Figure 4: Gender distribution of respondents



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

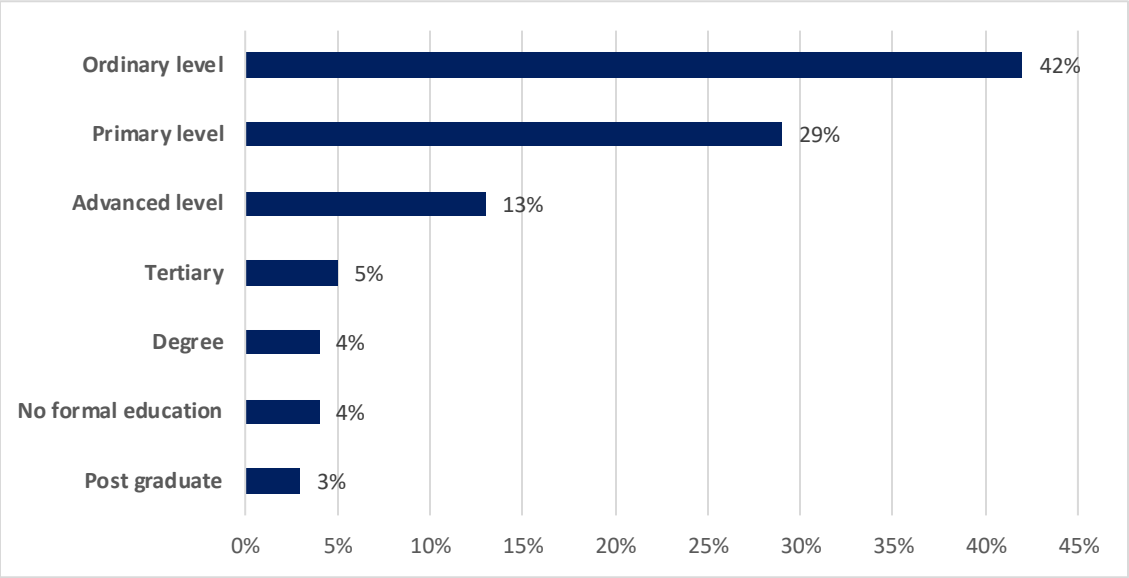
This near-parity is important, as it allows for a more gender-inclusive analysis of livelihood challenges and opportunities among youth. However, the slight male majority may reflect broader societal patterns such as higher male participation in public engagement or greater mobility, which can affect access to economic activities or services.

Education levels of respondents

Most respondents reported completing secondary level education, representing 42 percent (252) of the total. Following this, 29 percent (176) of respondents had primary-level education. Only a small fraction, 3 percent (17), indicated having a degree-level education, making it the least common category. These results highlight that a significant number of participants have not pursued higher formal education, with ordinary level being the most

prevalent education level completed. Below, Figure 5 illustrates the educational attainment levels of the respondents.

Figure 5: Highest level of education attained by respondents



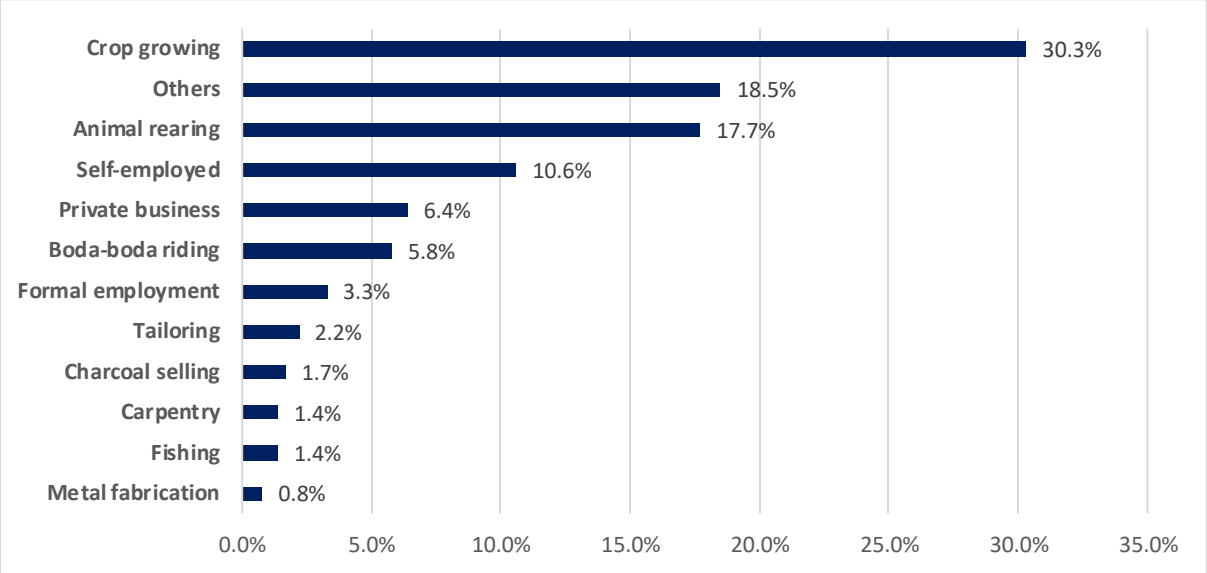
Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

This educational profile suggests a concentration of youth with mid-level academic credentials, which may constrain their access to formal employment or specialised training opportunities. The low incidence of degree-level attainment also points to systemic barriers such as financial limitations to further education, limited availability of tertiary institutions, or early school dropouts. These factors have implications for the types of jobs youth can access and their ability to engage in higher-value entrepreneurial or technical fields. As such, understanding of this education gap is critical for designing targeted capacity-building programmes and bridging the disconnect between youth aspirations and available opportunities.

Main sources of livelihood among respondents

The data indicates that crop cultivation is the primary source of livelihood, constituting 30.3 percent of responses. It is followed by animal husbandry, which accounts for 17.7 percent. In contrast, charcoal selling is one of the least common sources of income, cited in just 1.7 percent of responses. Notably, formal employment is also relatively low, reported by only 3.3 percent, highlighting that most respondents likely engage in informal or subsistence-level economic activities as reflected by 18 percent of the respondents in other forms of livelihoods. Moreover, self-employment (10.6 percent) and private business (6.4 percent) are not in the top three but still reflect significant entrepreneurial efforts. The findings of this analysis are illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Main sources of livelihood among respondents



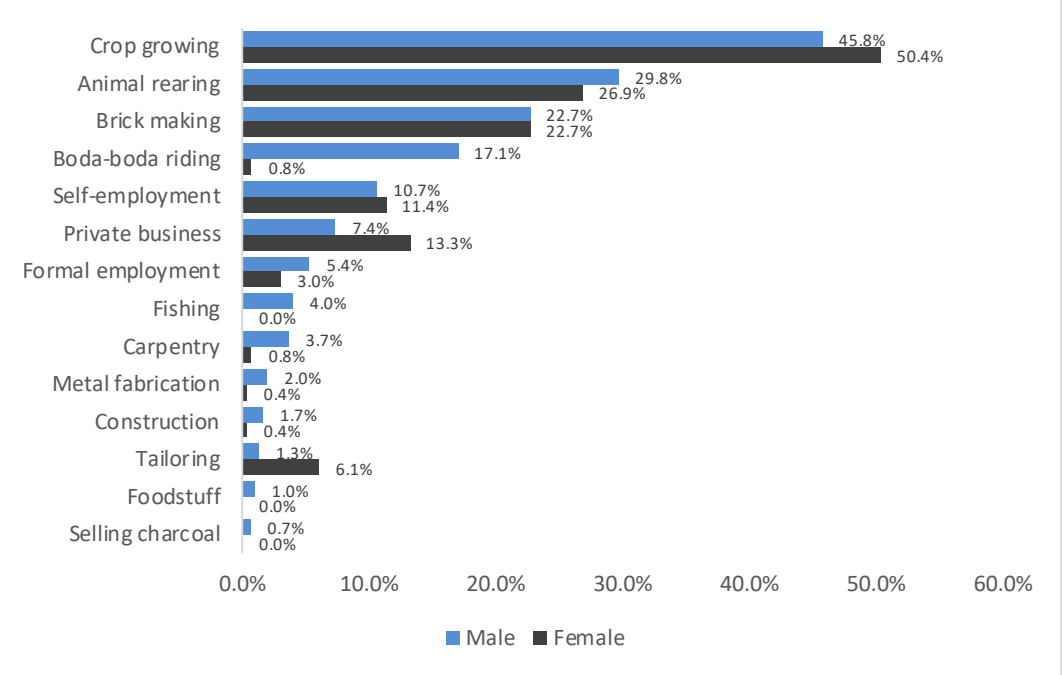
Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

This distribution highlighted the heavy reliance on agriculture and livestock sectors typically characterised by low income, vulnerability to climate variability, and limited scalability. The minimal presence in formal employment suggests that systemic barriers such as inadequate education, lack of job availability, or skill mismatches may have limited respondents' access to jobs. Similarly, while self-employment and private businesses reflect entrepreneurial activity, the relatively low percentages may point to obstacles such as limited capital, market access, or business development support. These patterns are important as they indicate that many of the youth operated in precarious economic conditions, highlighting the urgent need for policies that promote diversification, skill-building, and access to financial and infrastructural resources to support sustainable livelihoods.

Main source of livelihood by gender

Figure 7 illustrates significant gender disparities in livelihood activities among the respondents. Crop farming ranked as the most prevalent activity for both genders, with female participation higher at 50.4 percent compared to 45.8 percent for males. Following this, animal husbandry showed a slight male dominance, with 29.8 percent of males participating versus 26.9 percent of females. Interestingly, brick making revealed equal involvement from both sexes at 22.7 percent, whereas boda boda (motorcycle) riding was strictly male-dominated at 17.1 percent, with no female participation. Additionally, self-employment and private business ventures were more prevalent among females, suggesting a stronger representation of women in microenterprises. In contrast, formal employment, fishing, metal fabrication, and construction remained primarily male fields. Activities like tailoring and food sales were predominantly undertaken by women, reflecting traditional gender roles in income-generating tasks.

Figure 7: Main source of livelihood by gender



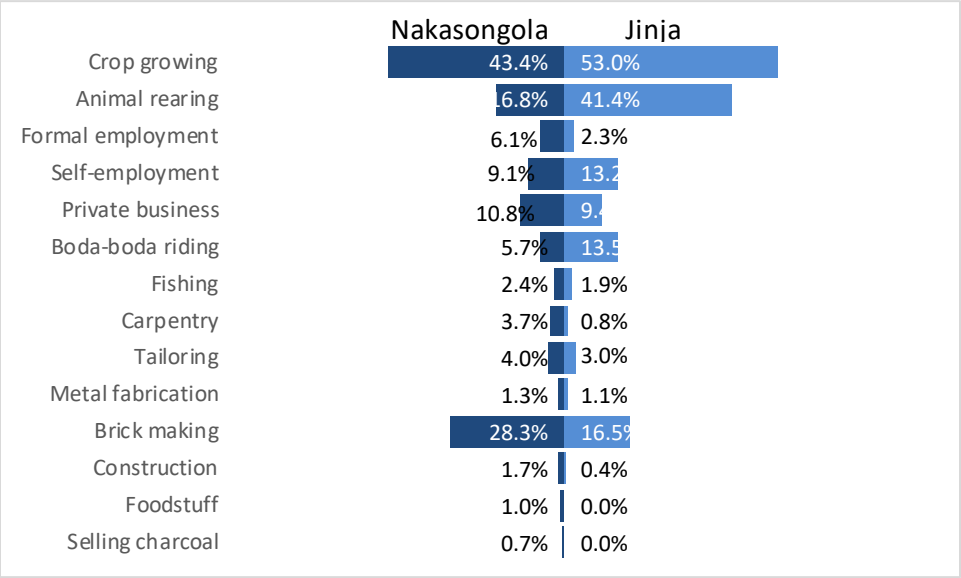
Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

These patterns reveal persistent gender norms that continue to shape occupational choices and opportunities. The near absence of women in certain high-mobility or higher-risk jobs such as boda boda (motorcycle) riding and construction may indicate structural or cultural barriers ranging from safety concerns and social expectations to lack of training and asset ownership. Conversely, the higher engagement of women in self-employment and food-related businesses pointed to both resilience and necessity-driven entrepreneurship. These insights are critical for designing gender-responsive programmes that address unequal access to resources, expand vocational training across sectors, and challenge stereotypes that limit economic mobility for both women and men.

Main source of livelihood by district

Figure 8 illustrates the distribution of livelihood activities in Nakasongola and Jinja, emphasising both similarities and distinct variations. Crop cultivation was the predominant activity in both districts, occurring at a higher rate in Nakasongola (53.0 percent) than in Jinja (43.4 percent). Following this, animal husbandry was significantly more common in Nakasongola (41.4 percent) compared to Jinja (16.8 percent). In contrast, brick making was much more prevalent in Jinja (28.3 percent) than in Nakasongola (16.5 percent), marking it as a key distinctive activity for that district. Self-employment and private enterprises were more prevalent in Jinja, indicating a greater level of entrepreneurial activity in that area. Boda-boda riding was more frequent in Nakasongola (13.5 percent), whereas formal employment was slightly elevated in Jinja (6.1 percent). Other income-generating pursuits, including tailoring, fishing, and food sales, had moderate participation, often somewhat higher in Jinja. At the same time, fields like construction, metal fabrication, and carpentry had limited engagement in both regions. Overall, the chart highlighted Nakasongola's tendency towards agriculture and transport-related livelihoods, while Jinja exhibited more involvement in skilled trades and small business activities.

Figure 8: Main source of livelihood by district



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

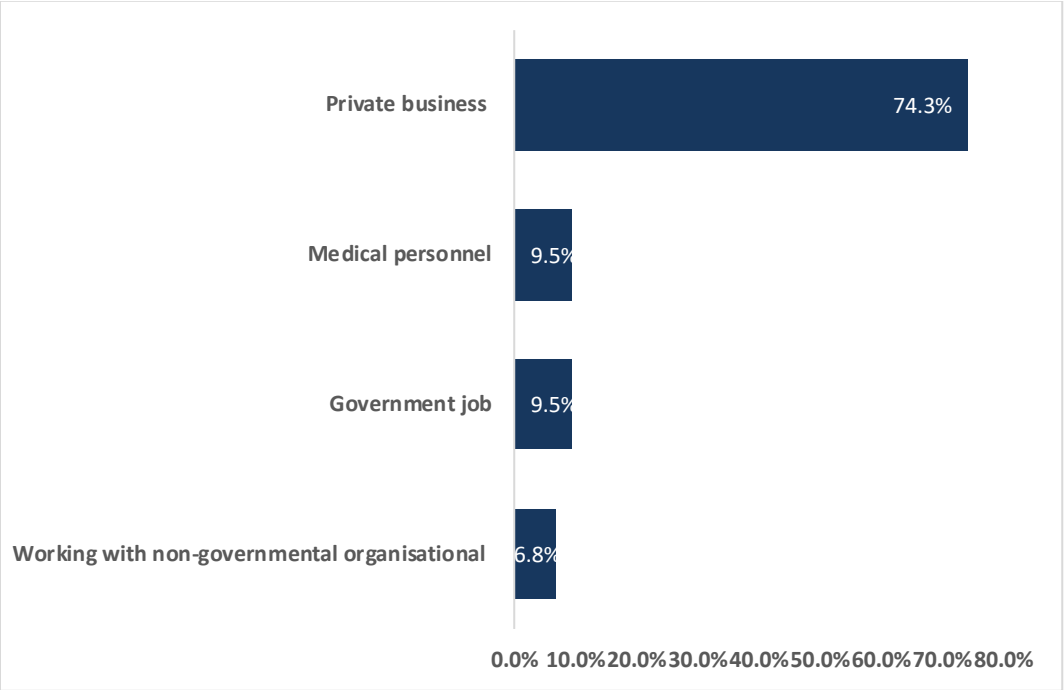
Overall, the data highlighted Nakasongola's strong orientation towards agriculture and transport-related livelihoods, which may reflect its rural character and limited industrial or commercial infrastructure. On the other hand, Jinja's higher involvement in brick making, self-employment, and small businesses suggests a more urbanised setting with diversified economic options and possibly better market access. These district-level differences are critical for tailoring livelihood support programmes where Nakasongola may benefit from agricultural enhancement and rural transport initiatives, while Jinja may require expanded entrepreneurial training, business development services, and formal job creation efforts. As such, understanding of these localised livelihood patterns helps ensure interventions align with the unique socio-economic contexts of each district.

Understanding young people's career aspirations and underlying motivations to enter and seek green jobs and environmental conservation

The quest for a dream job

Respondents were asked if they were currently in their dream job, and the results showed that a significant 81.6 percent (483) answered "No," indicating they were not in their ideal profession. In comparison, only 18.4 percent (109) answered "Yes," suggesting that while a small segment of the population is reaching their career goals, the overwhelming majority is not. This highlights a considerable gap between current employment conditions and individual career aspirations, potentially driven by systemic factors such as limited job availability, skills mismatch, or lack of access to opportunities in preferred sectors. Among those who reported having their dream job, the majority 74.3 percent (55) identified private business ownership as their ideal, reflecting a strong entrepreneurial orientation among youth. Jobs in government and the medical field were the second most cited aspirations, each at 9.5 percent (7), while working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) was the least mentioned, cited by only 6.8 percent (5) as illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Young people's quest for a dream job



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

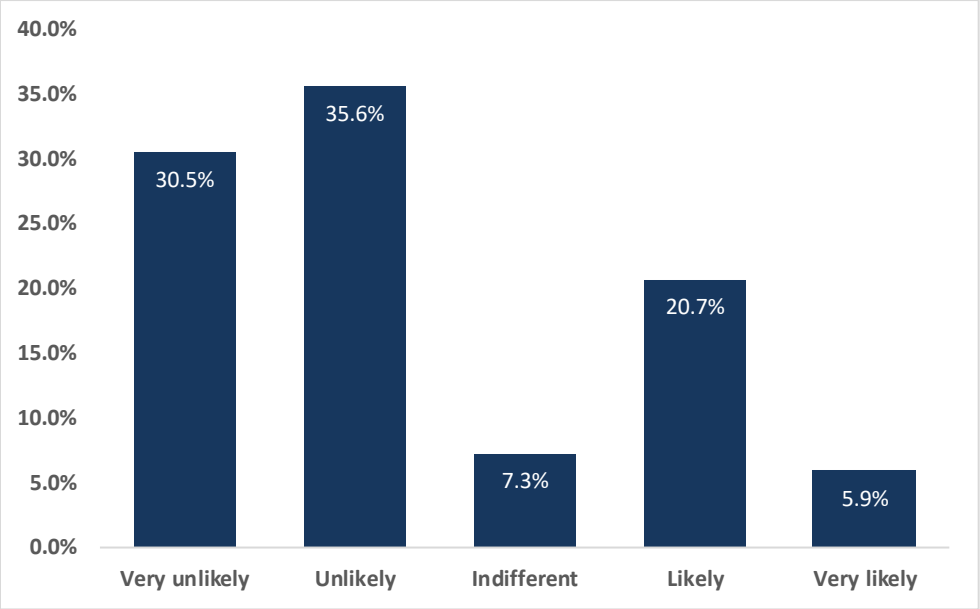
The relatively low representation in structured sectors such as government, medical, and NGO roles may point to structural barriers, including high entry thresholds, educational requirements, and limited vacancies. These findings underline the disconnect between youth aspirations and actual labour market dynamics. The strong preference for entrepreneurship also suggests a desire for autonomy, income stability, and possibly a reaction to perceived rigidity or exclusivity in formal sectors. This contrast between what young people hope to achieve and what is currently accessible to them reflects not only individual ambition but also broader socio-economic limitations, making it a critical area for policy attention. As such, bridging this gap will likely require targeted interventions in education, vocational training, access to finance, and support for start-up ecosystems.

The prospects of getting a dream job

When asked about their chances of reaching their dream jobs, 66.1 percent (390) of participants felt it was either "Unlikely" (35.6 percent, 210) or "Very unlikely" (30.5 percent, 180), indicating a strong sense of pessimism and perceived obstacles in achieving their goals. Conversely, only 26.6 percent (157) believed it was "Likely" (20.7 percent, 122) or "Very likely" (5.9 percent, 35), indicating the low level of optimism in achieving their dream job. The perspective of "Very likely" was the least common, mentioned by just 5.9 percent (35) of the respondents. This disparity highlights a considerable divide between career aspirations and perceived feasibility, highlighting how structural constraints such as limited access to education, financial resources, mentorship, or job opportunities may discourage youth from pursuing their desired career paths. The overwhelmingly pessimistic outlook could reflect cumulative experiences of rejection, unemployment, or limited exposure to role models and networks in aspirational fields. In contrast, the minority who feel confident about achieving their dream jobs may possess stronger support systems, higher education levels, or better access to resources.

Understanding this perception gap is critical for policy and programme design. It suggests that beyond job creation, efforts should also focus on building youth confidence through mentorship, exposure to opportunities, soft skills training, and access to enabling environments that make ambition feel realistic. These insights are illustrated in Figure 10.

Figure 10: The respondents' views on the likelihood of landing a dream job.



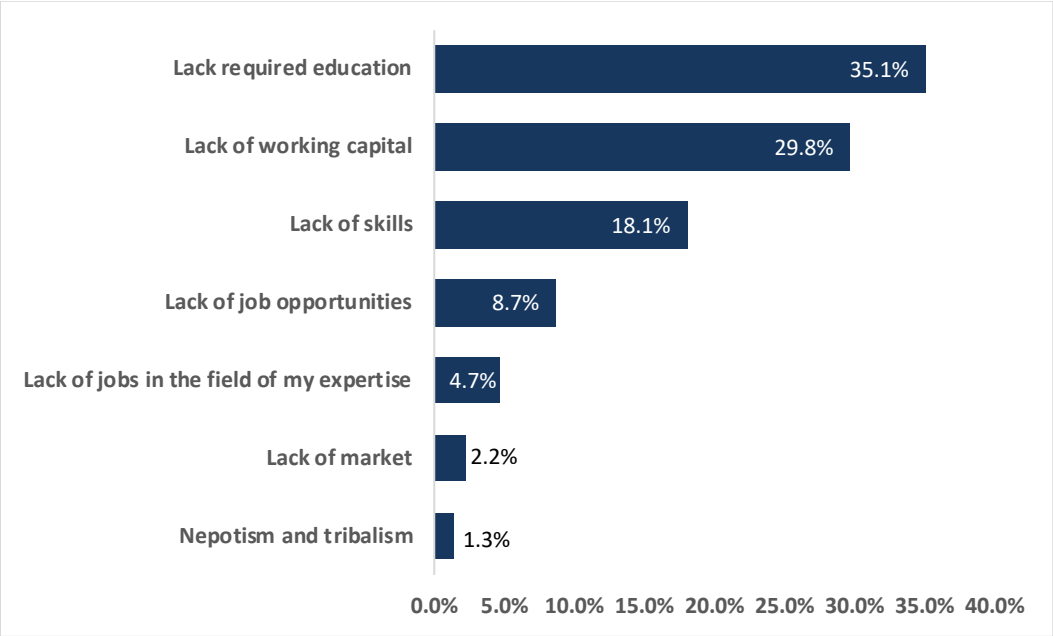
Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

Moreover, when respondents were asked about the main barrier to achieving their dream jobs, the leading constraint cited was a lack of necessary education, mentioned by 35.1 percent of participants. This highlights the essential role that academic credentials play in securing desired employment opportunities, particularly in formal sectors where qualifications are often minimum entry requirements. It also reflects systemic challenges such as the high cost of education, limited availability of institutions, and early school dropout rates that disproportionately affect rural and low-income youth.

Following this, 29.8 percent of the youth indicated insufficient working capital as a significant hurdle, emphasising the financial difficulties associated with pursuing their ideal careers. This lack of capital may limit young people's ability to start businesses, enrol in vocational programmes, or even relocate for better job prospects. Barriers like absence of collateral, inaccessible credit facilities, and limited exposure to financial literacy may further compound this constraint.

Additionally, 18.1 percent of the respondents identified inadequate skills training as a primary obstacle, suggesting a disconnect between available education and the competencies needed in today's job market. Conversely, the least mentioned barrier was nepotism and tribalism, noted by only 1.3 percent of respondents, which may imply that institutional favouritism is perceived as less significant compared to more immediate economic and educational challenges, as illustrated in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Key constraints to achieving a dream job among young people



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As such, these findings indicate that structural barriers particularly those linked to human capital development and financial access remained as key obstacles to youth employment. Addressing them requires integrated strategies that combine educational reform, skills development, and inclusive financing mechanisms. As such, efforts to improve employability must tackle both the capacity and resource sides of the employment equation.

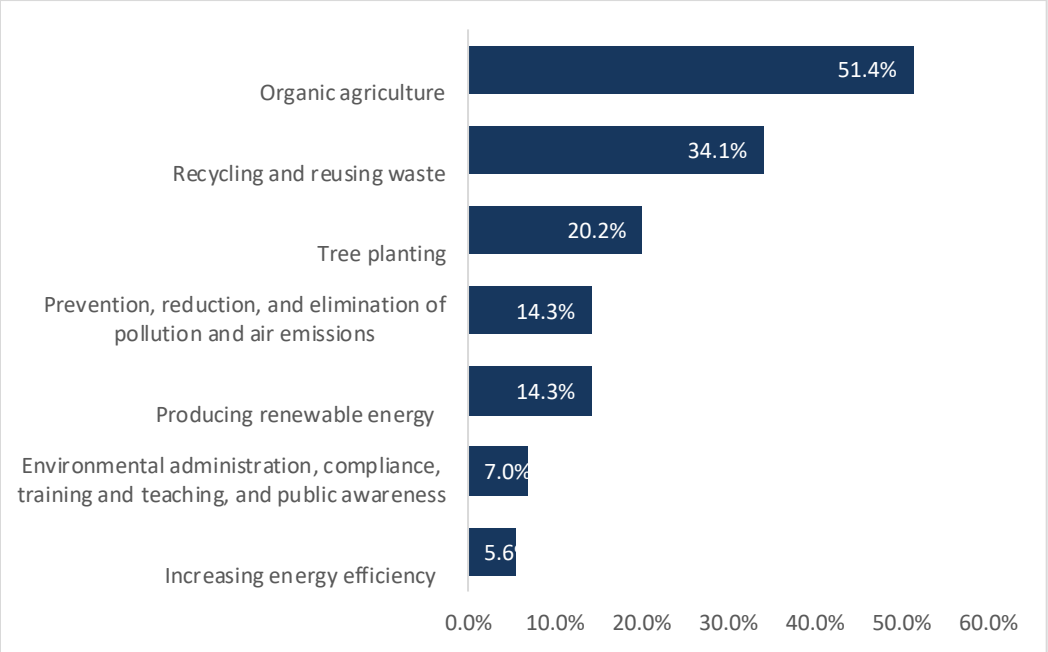
Young people's motivation and activities for preserving the environment

When asked if young people were motivated to participate in activities aimed at preserving and restoring the environment, most respondents replied positively. Specifically, 86.4 percent (516 individuals) expressed a willingness to engage in environmentally friendly work, whereas only 13.6 percent (81 respondents) answered negatively, indicating that a small minority lacked such motivation. This positive feedback highlights a significant level of environmental awareness and the readiness by the majority of respondents to engage in sustainable practices. Additionally, respondents were queried about the types of activities they participate in to benefit the environment. According to Figure 12, the most frequently mentioned activity was organic agriculture, noted by 51.4 percent of responses. This was followed by recycling and reusing waste, which accounted for 34.1 percent, making it the second most frequently cited action.

Alternatively, increasing energy efficiency was mentioned the least, with only 5.6 percent of responses acknowledging this activity. These findings imply that respondents tend to favour practical, land-based environmental efforts, while more technical interventions like energy efficiency are less emphasised. This disparity reveals a strong inclination towards hands-on, land-focused ecological practices, whereas technical or efficiency-based approaches tended to be less prevalent. In contrast, lower engagement in technical areas such as energy efficiency and environmental compliance may reflect limited awareness, specialised training requirements, or insufficient exposure to technologies and institutional frameworks. This disparity suggests the need for balanced environmental programming one that both builds on youth interest in practical, hands-on conservation efforts and expands their knowledge

and skills in underrepresented yet critical sectors such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, and environmental governance. These insights point to the importance of integrating green skills training with community engagement to fully realise the youth potential in environmental sustainability.

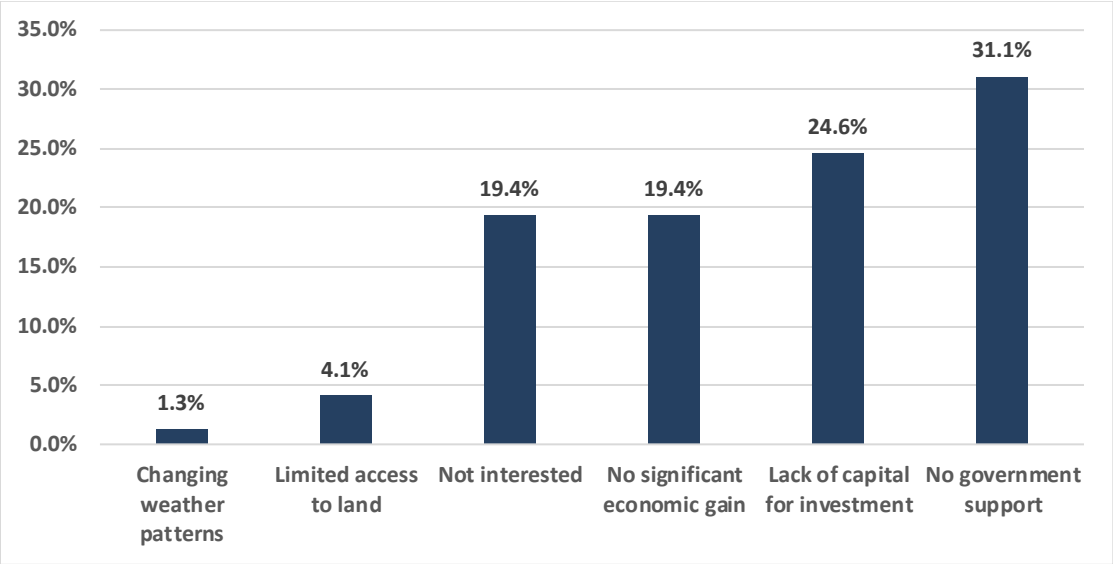
Figure 12: Activities undertaken to preserve the environment



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

Of the 13.6 percent (81) young people who reported being unmotivated to participate in environmental preservation activities, further explanation was sought for their lack of engagement. According to the data in Figure 13, the predominant reason given was insufficient government support, cited by 31.1 percent of the respondents. This was closely followed by inadequate funding for investment (24.6 percent), underscoring financial constraints as a significant obstacle. Additionally, 19.4 percent of responses highlighted minimal perceived economic benefits and general disinterest. The least common justification was changing weather patterns, mentioned by only 1.3 percent, indicating that environmental factors are not seen as major deterrents. As such, the responses suggest that institutional and financial challenges surpass environmental or motivational issues in explaining the reluctance to engage in environmentally supportive activities.

Figure 13: Key reasons for not participating in activities that preserve the environment



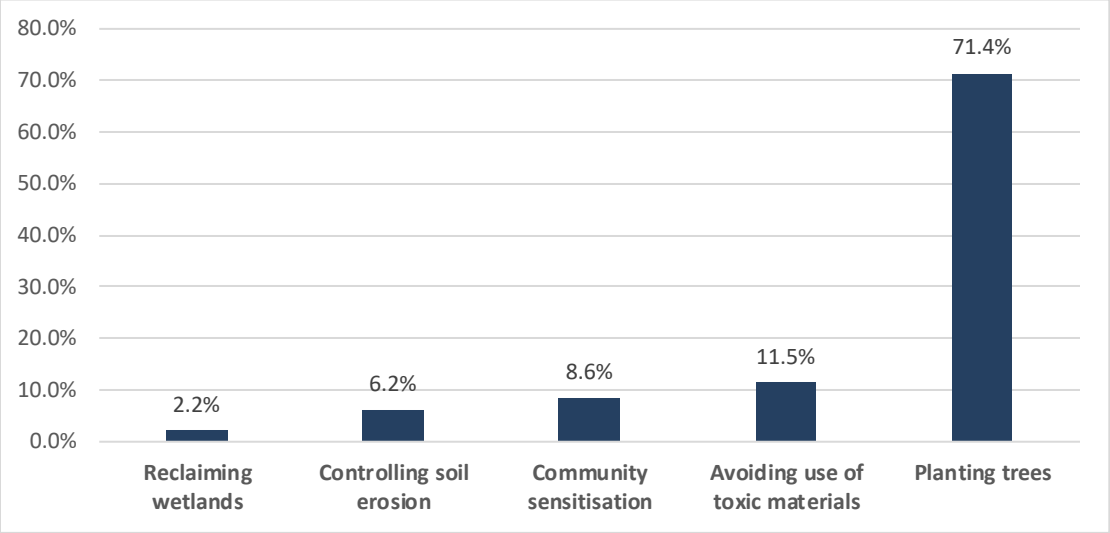
Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

Overall, the responses suggest that youth disengagement from environmental work stemmed more from external systemic challenges such as weak policy support and limited financing than from internal motivation or climate awareness gaps. Addressing these issues will require targeted public investment, incentive structures, and community-based green enterprise models that clearly link sustainability efforts to tangible economic benefits for youth.

Young people's activities for conserving and restoring the environment

Tree planting emerged as the leading environmental conservation and restoration effort, comprising 71.4 percent of all references (see Figure 14). This highlights its status as the primary action in the data. The next most cited action was the avoidance of toxic materials, at 11.5 percent, whereas reclaiming wetlands received the least attention, at 2.2 percent. This reflects a pronounced focus on tree planting within environmental initiatives, while other essential tasks, such as wetland restoration, were significantly undervalued.

Figure 14: Young people's activities for environmental conservation and restoration



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

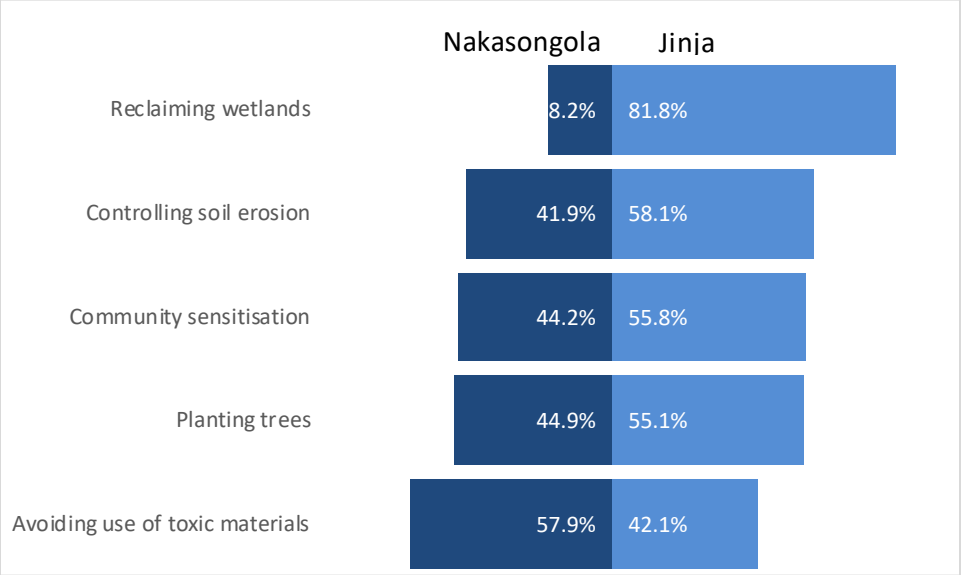
The data reflected the focus on tree planting within environmental initiatives, while other critical but perhaps less understood or more technically demanding efforts such as wetland restoration or erosion control remained significantly underemphasised. These trends suggest a need for broader environmental education and capacity-building to diversify conservation strategies. While the prominence of tree planting is encouraging, a more balanced approach that includes lesser-prioritised but ecologically vital actions could enhance the long-term effectiveness of local sustainability efforts. Expanding awareness and technical support for underrepresented practices may empower youth to participate in a wider range of impactful environmental interventions.

Young people's activities for conserving and restoring the environment across districts

The most notable feature of conservation and restoration efforts (see Figure 15) was the pronounced disparity between Nakasongola and Jinja districts in wetland reclamation. Jinja accounted for 81.8 percent of the mentions regarding this activity, while Nakasongola only represented 18.2 percent, revealing a significant difference in commitment to this form of environmental restoration. This gap may reflect the urban pressures and infrastructural challenges in Jinja, where wetland degradation has more visible impacts such as flooding, pollution, or biodiversity loss thus driving more attention and intervention.

This trend of increased participation from Jinja continues with other activities, including controlling soil erosion (58.1 percent for Jinja versus 41.9 percent for Nakasongola) and community sensitization (55.8 percent vs. 44.2 percent). Although the differences in tree planting (55.1 percent for Jinja and 44.9 percent for Nakasongola) were less pronounced, Jinja maintained a slight lead. Interestingly, avoiding the use of toxic materials reversed this trend, with Nakasongola leading at 57.9 percent compared to Jinja's 42.1 percent. This could reflect greater local awareness of agricultural chemical hazards in more rural contexts or targeted sensitisation efforts in farming communities.

Figure 15[2]: Young people's activities for conserving and restoring the environment across districts



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

Overall, the findings indicate that Jinja exhibited broader engagement in most environmental conservation and restoration activities, especially wetland reclamation. These patterns also suggest the influence of geographic, socio-economic, and ecological contexts on environmental priorities. For instance, urban districts like Jinja may face more immediate and visible environmental threats, while rural areas like Nakasongola may focus on agriculture-related practices. These differences are critical for tailoring region-specific environmental strategies and support mechanisms.

Young people's activities for conserving and restoring the environment across gender

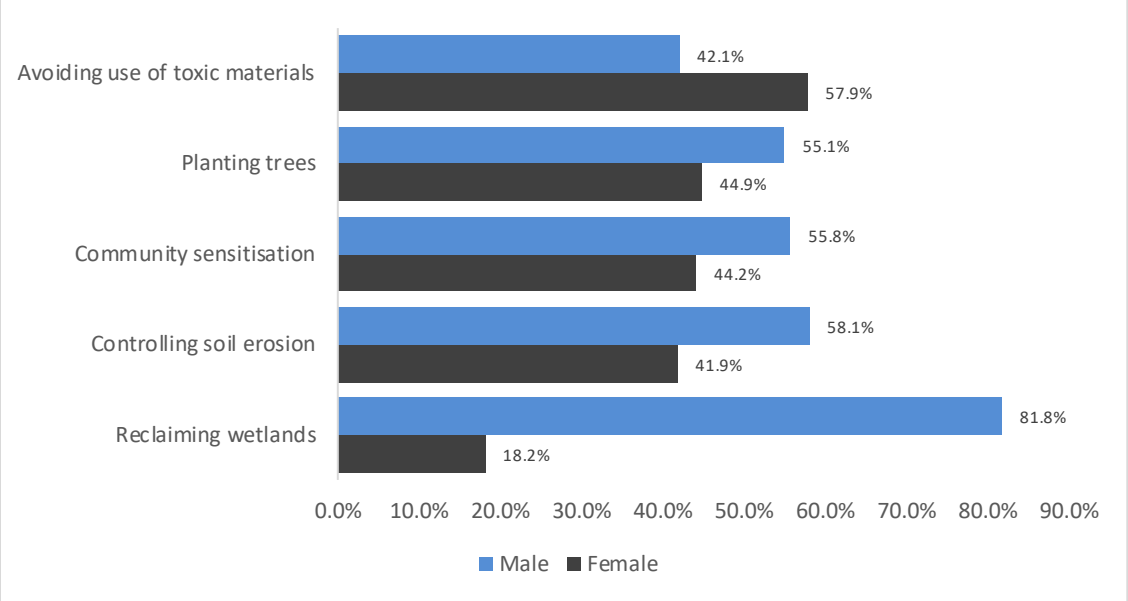
A closer look at gender differences revealed significant variations in participation in environmental conservation and restoration efforts. Women were more involved in avoiding the use of harmful materials (57.9 percent) than men (42.1 percent), reflecting a stronger engagement in activities directly linked to household health and safety. In contrast, men were predominant in all other activities. The most pronounced gender disparity was noted in wetland reclamation, where 81.8 percent of contributions were made by men, while only 18.2 percent came from women. Men also had higher participation in controlling soil erosion (58.1 percent) and community awareness initiatives (55.8 percent), whereas the gap in tree planting was less pronounced, with 55.1 percent being male and 44.9 percent female.

These patterns suggest that gendered preferences and participation in environmental work may be shaped by cultural norms, physical demands, access to resources, and perceived roles. Men's dominance in physically intensive or public-facing efforts, such as wetland reclamation and erosion control, may reflect traditional gender roles that assign outdoor labour and leadership roles to males. Conversely, women's greater involvement in activities

[2] Owing to multiple responses recorded and analysed for this study, there are tables in this report that have percentages that exceed 100.

such as reducing harmful substances in daily use may align with caregiving roles and responsibilities related to health as well as well-being, as illustrated in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Young people's activities for conserving and restoring the environment across gender



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

As such, understanding these dynamics is crucial for designing inclusive environmental programmes. Tailored interventions that lower barriers for women such as safety provisions, training, or community-based leadership opportunities can help expand female participation in broader conservation efforts. Similarly, reinforcing gender-equitable narratives around environmental stewardship can foster balanced engagement across all types of activities.

This corresponds with the qualitative information, as participants provided perspectives on the different conservation and restoration efforts occurring in their communities. Almost universally noted in the FGDs, youth engaged in tree planting to restore depleted forests, enhance vegetation, and address the negative effects of deforestation. Tree planting emerged as a key activity that youth saw as both an immediate and actionable response to environmental challenges. It was regarded as a practical and accessible measure that required minimal resources and could be easily integrated into community initiatives. Many of the youth described tree planting as a doable activity; one that was introduced in school clubs or community clean-up events and represented an immediate, visible contribution to restoring their environment. As one Female FGD participant from Jinja district stated:

> *In our community, young people are actively involved in tree planting every year to replace the trees that have been cut down. It's become a way for us to give back to nature and address the damage caused by deforestation. We believe tree planting can help improve vegetation cover and restore the environment for future generations* (FGD with youth, Wanyange village, Bugembe sub-county, Jinja district).

This deep-rooted commitment to tree planting is more than just an act of environmental concern; it is a practical response to the urgent environmental issues they face. Youth participants consistently noted that the loss of trees directly impacted the soil quality, biodiversity, and water retention, and this compelled them to take action. However, even with such enthusiasm, participants consistently pointed out that challenges like land access and financial limitations prevented them from scaling up their efforts. These practical barriers significantly affected their ability to engage in larger-scale projects such as agroforestry or large tree planting initiatives. As one local leader from Jinja City described:

> *Young people face many obstacles in green jobs, starting with land. Engaging in agroforestry or large-scale tree planting is impossible without access to affordable land. Even when we have ideas, we lack the financial backing to start or expand projects* (KII with Chairperson, JROP Village, Walukuba sub-county, Jinja City).

This emphasises the gap between the strong motivation to restore the environment and the structural constraints that limit the impact of youth-led initiatives. Land access remained a fundamental barrier, especially in areas where large-scale environmental projects required land ownership or long-term leases, which most youth cannot afford. Moreover, the strong preference for tree planting was further shaped by lived experiences of environmental degradation. Youth and community leaders frequently pointed to increased heat, changing rainfall patterns, and biodiversity loss as immediate and tangible consequences of deforestation. These issues were not abstract but were directly tied to the communities' economic survival, particularly through agriculture. One youth councillor from Nakasongola district vividly described the changing rainfall patterns:

> *Rainfall patterns have changed significantly over the past 3–5 years… now it is erratic. When it rains, it sometimes comes with storms that damage crops, houses, and infrastructure (*KII with Male Youth Councillor and Minister for ICT in the Buruli Kingdom, Nakasongola district).

The qualitative data suggested that these observed environmental changes were the primary drivers of youth engagement in local restoration activities. The urgency of these changes, such as the unpredictable weather, soil erosion, and decreasing agricultural yields compelled youth to focus on practical solutions such as tree planting, as these are seen as necessary steps to restore the balance of local ecosystems.

In addition to tree planting, another common theme that emerged from the FGDs was the commitment of the youth to water conservation. Youth were taking responsibility for cleaning water sources, clearing weeds, and ensuring that water bodies remained free from pollutants. This focus on water conservation was particularly critical in areas where youth relied on wetlands and lakes for their livelihoods. One male FGD participant from Jinja district, explained the significance of their efforts:

> *As young people, we take responsibility for cleaning and maintaining our local water sources. This includes clearing weeds and ensuring the water bodies remain free of pollutants. Our efforts focus on protecting wetlands and lakes so they can be used sustainably for our community's needs and future generations. It's key to ensuring the environment remains healthy and resilient* (FGD with youth, Bugobya Village, Busedde sub-county, Jinja district).

In regions where wetlands and lakes are vital for agriculture, livestock, and fishing, youth recognise that the sustainability of these resources directly impacts their economic well-

being. They understand that the long-term availability of these water sources depends on immediate conservation efforts. Yet, as with tree planting, the ability to scale-up water conservation activities was hindered by limited resources, lack of formal training, and insufficient funding.

Furthermore, gender dynamics played a significant role in shaping how youth participated in environmental restoration activities. The gendered division of labour emerged as a prominent theme in the qualitative data. Female participants were more likely to engage in awareness-raising activities, often linked to their roles as caregivers and community communicators. These roles are typically seen as more socially acceptable and are rooted in cultural expectations. One female participant from Jinja district shared:

> *There is a stigma attached to green jobs. People think waste collection is for thieves… this discourages young people from exploring these opportunities* (FGD with youth, Wanyange Village, Mafubira sub-county, Jinja district).

In contrast, male participants were more inclined toward technical innovations or eco-friendly projects. However, even they expressed frustrations around access to tools, mentorship, and funding, which often prevented them from fully realising their aspirations. The gendered nature of environmental roles thus limits the opportunities available to youth, especially young women, and restricts the diversity of roles youth can play in environmental restoration.

Finally, financial constraints also emerged as a central theme in discussions about educational advancement. Many young people pointed out that financial limitations were the key barrier preventing them from continuing their education or pursuing specialised environmental training. Several female participants specifically mentioned how gender norms which prioritise boys' education combined with financial challenges, left them with fewer opportunities to advance. One female FGD participant from Jinja district explained:

> *While I aspire to continue my studies, I lack support at home, and my educational goals are often seen as less urgent than those of my male peers* (FGD with youth, Itakaibolu Village, Busedde sub-county, Jinja district).

Therefore, this lack of access to education compounded the skills gap and limited the ability of young people to fully engage in advanced environmental careers.

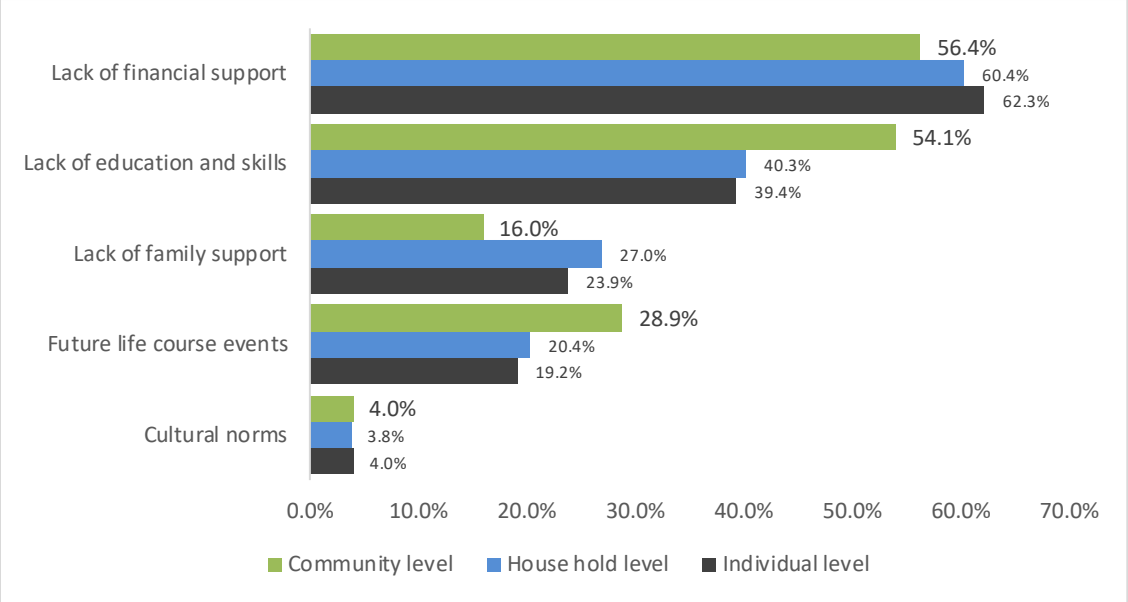
In conclusion, the qualitative insights provided a deeper understanding of the nuances behind youth environmental participation. While tree planting and water conservation remained central to their environmental efforts, the youth faced numerous challenges, including land access, financial constraints, and gendered expectations. These barriers highlight the need for targeted interventions that address these challenges and provide youth with the necessary resources, mentorship, and support to scale up their efforts. The qualitative data thus complements the quantitative findings, showing that while youth are eager to engage in environmental restoration, their actions are constrained by their social, economic, and cultural realities.

5. Barriers to young people's involvement in environmental conservation and restoration

Young people were also asked about the obstacles preventing them from participating in environmental preservation and restoration efforts at individual, household, and community levels. A striking point indicated in Figure 18 was the issue of inadequate

financial support, reported by 62.3 percent of participants at the individual level, 60.4 percent at the household level, and 56.4 percent at the community level.

Figure 17: Barriers to young people's involvement in activities to conserve and restore the environment



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

This clearly shows that financial limitations were seen as the major barrier across all levels, particularly impacting individuals and households who faced resource constraints. This may include a lack of funds for purchasing equipment, participating in green programmes, or covering daily survival costs, which often take precedence over environmental involvement. The second most reported obstacle was lack of education and skills, mentioned in 54.1 percent of responses at the community level, 40.3 percent at the household level, and 39.4 percent at the individual level. This highlights the need for access to education and training to encourage youth participation. Without practical knowledge or environmental literacy, many of the youth may not feel confident or qualified to engage in restoration activities, especially in areas requiring technical input like ecosystem management, energy efficiency, or land rehabilitation.

Moreover, the lack of family support was also noted, especially at the household level (27.0 percent), pointing to its role as a hindrance in certain situations. Family disapproval, competing household priorities, or lack of encouragement may discourage youth from participating in unpaid or voluntary environmental efforts. Concerns about future life events appeared in 19.2 percent of individual responses, indicating worries about long-term personal objectives and surrounding life circumstances. This may reflect uncertainty around employment, marriage, education, or relocation, thus reducing the perceived importance of environmental concerns. The least highlighted barrier was that concerning cultural norms, which was referenced by only 4.0 percent of responses at the individual level, indicating that social traditions were less of a hindrance when compared to financial and educational barriers. This suggests that while culture influences behaviour, more immediate structural and personal constraints play a much larger role in shaping youth engagement.

Overall, the results emphasised that financial and educational challenges were the main hurdles to youth involvement in environmental initiatives, with family support also being a

significant concern, mainly within households. Interventions should therefore prioritise accessible funding mechanisms, targeted skills training, and household-level advocacy to mobilise wider youth participation across all levels.

Barriers to young people's involvement in environmental conservation and restoration by gender

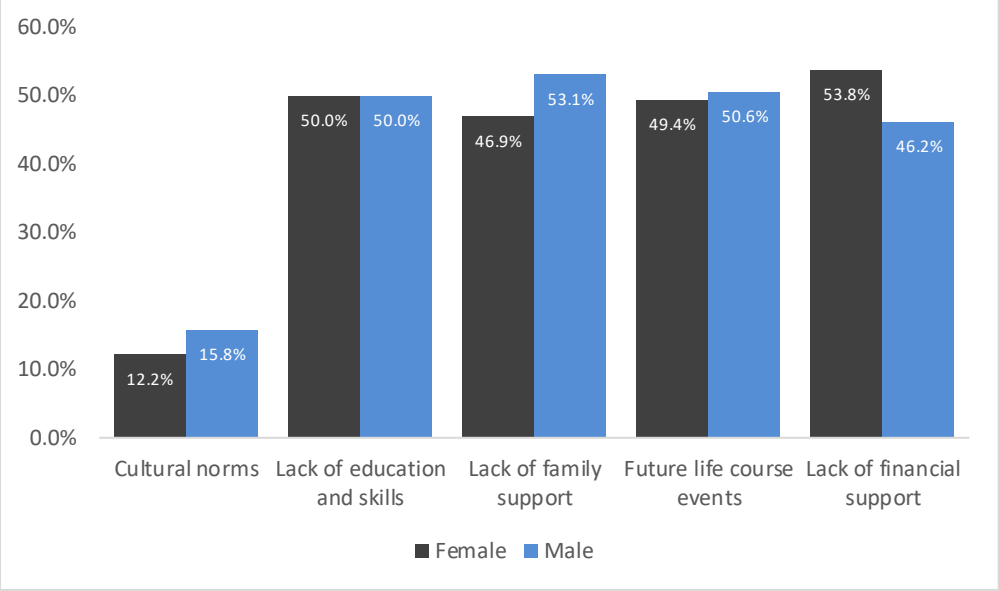
Individual level

At the individual level, the analysis revealed that the primary obstacle faced by both males and females was insufficient financial support, with 53.8 percent of males and 46.2 percent of females listing it as their biggest challenge. Males, however, cited this lack of financial assistance more often than females. This may reflect a broader male tendency to pursue capital-intensive environmental roles or ventures such as tree planting or land rehabilitation that require upfront investment, while women may focus on less resource-demanding practices.

The second most prevalent barrier was inadequate education and skills, cited by 50.0 percent of both genders, highlighting the importance of education and skill development for everyone. This parity underscored a universal need for environmental literacy and vocational training regardless of gender, suggesting that skill-building initiatives can have broad appeal and impact.

The third most reported barrier was insufficient family support, with 53.1 percent of females and 46.9 percent of males acknowledging it, indicating that females feel more unsupported by their families in pursuing environmental conservation efforts. This may be tied to gendered household responsibilities, restrictive expectations, or an underestimation of the value of women's involvement in public or voluntary activities. Additionally, 49.4 percent of females and 50.6 percent of males identified future life events as a concern, showing that life planning and external pressures affected both genders similarly. This included uncertainty related to marriage, education, employment, or caregiving roles, which can deprioritise sustained engagement in environmental work. Cultural norms were the least mentioned barrier, recognised by only 12.2 percent of females and 15.8 percent of males, indicating that cultural expectations were not seen as a major obstacle for either gender, as shown in Figure 18. While not the predominant obstacle, it still suggests that traditional views around gender roles or age-based authority may subtly influence participation in some contexts.

Figure 18: Individual-level barriers to young people's involvement in activities to conserve and restore the environment

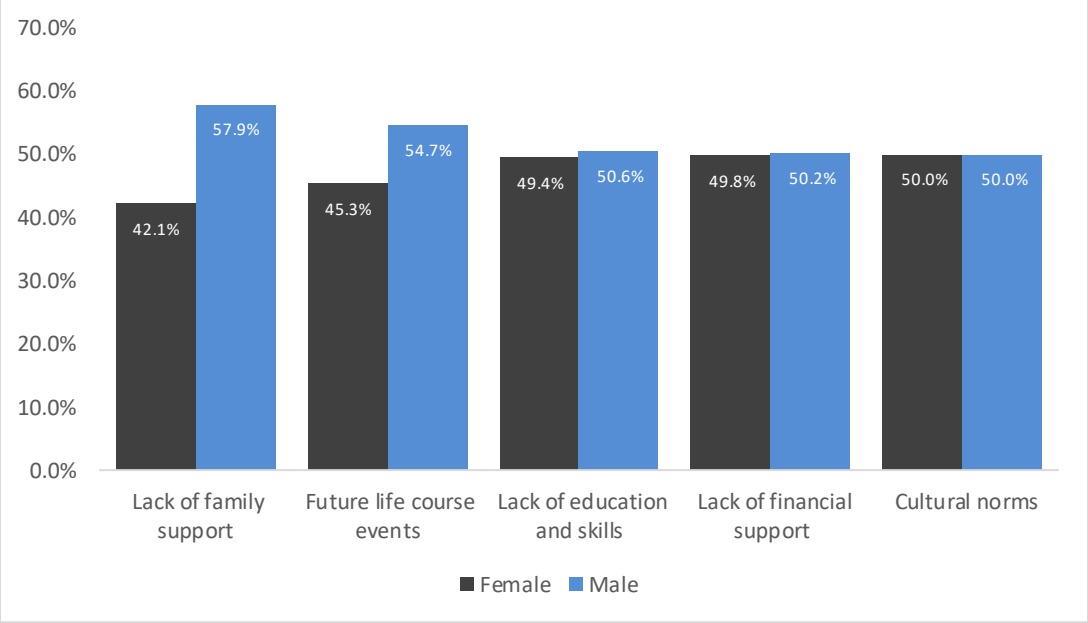


Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

Household Levels

To gain a deeper insight into the gender differences in barriers affecting young people's participation in environmental conservation and restoration activities, an analysis was performed. Figure 19 illustrates that both males and females encountered similar challenges, with financial support being a major hurdle for both groups.

Figure 19: Household-level barriers to young people's involvement in activities to conserve and restore the environment



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

However, a slight distinction was observed: females (50.2 percent) reported a greater lack of financial support compared to males (49.8 percent). This subtle difference may reflect the compounding financial vulnerability that women often face due to lower income levels, limited control over resources, or reduced access to credit and ownership. The issue of insufficient education and skills was almost evenly distributed, with 50.6 percent of males and 49.4 percent of females identifying it, suggesting minimal gender difference in the need for education and skill enhancement.

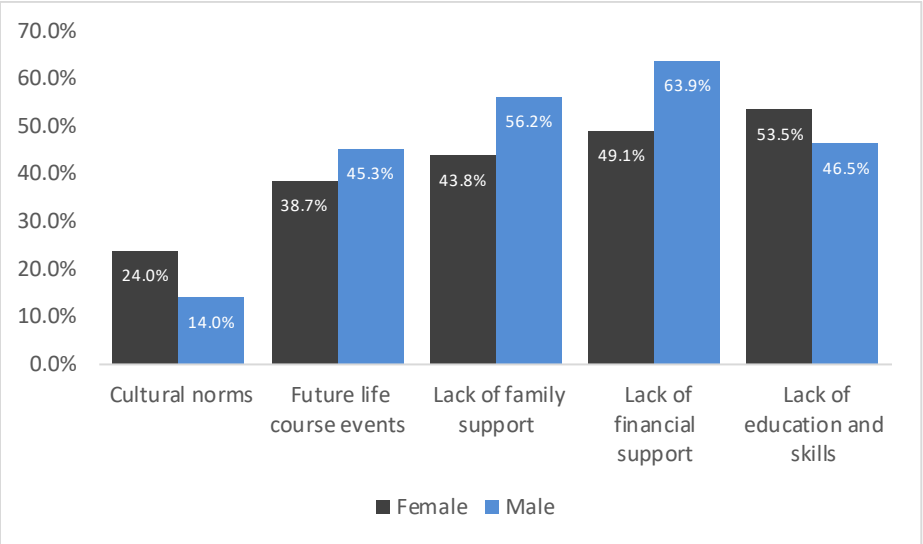
This underscores the cross-cutting importance of skills development programmes that address the needs of both young men and women without strong differentiation. The most significant gender gap was seen in family support, where 57.9 percent of females listed it as a barrier, compared to only 42.1 percent of males. This indicates that family support is particularly crucial for females. This may reflect gender-specific expectations or restrictions such as domestic responsibilities or limitations on women's participation in non-traditional or unpaid roles that can prevent young women from engaging fully in environmental initiatives without family approval or encouragement.

In addition, future life events and cultural norms were similarly acknowledged by both genders, with 54.7 percent of males and 45.3 percent of females discussing future life events, and both genders equally citing cultural norms at 50.0 percent, indicating no remarkable gender disparity on these matters. This parity suggests that broader societal uncertainties and traditional values continue to influence both genders equally, reinforcing the need for systemic changes rather than solely gender-targeted solutions.

Community Level

At the community level, Figure 20 highlights the major obstacle of insufficient financial support, reported by 63.9 percent of males and 49.1 percent of females. This establishes it as the predominant barrier for both genders, with males perceiving financial constraints more acutely. This may reflect the types of roles or initiatives males pursue in community-based environmental efforts such as infrastructure-related projects or leadership roles that require higher capital investment. It may also point to men's more direct engagement with external financing or fundraising, where access barriers become more visible.

Figure 20: Community level barriers to young people's involvement in activities to conserve and restore the environment



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

The second most frequently identified barrier was inadequate family support, noted by 56.2 percent of females and 43.8 percent of males, which suggested that females felt a greater lack of familial backing in their environmental initiatives. This reinforced earlier patterns showing that family dynamics played a disproportionately influential role in women's public engagement, particularly in rural or traditional communities where household approval can determine participation. Additionally, concerns about future life events were significant, mentioned by 45.3 percent of females and 38.7 percent of males, indicating anxieties regarding both personal and external influences on environmental involvement. These included responsibilities such as caregiving, marriage, or relocation factors that may more frequently disrupt women's long-term engagement in volunteer or unpaid community work. The least frequently cited barrier was cultural norms, referenced by 24.0 percent of females and 14.0 percent of males, suggesting that cultural expectations were perceived as a less significant hurdle compared to financial and family issues. While not the dominant challenge, the higher female response still points to lingering traditional gender expectations that may subtly limit women's freedom to participate equally in community affairs.

Summary of barriers to youth engagement in green jobs

Young people face a range of barriers that limit their participation in green jobs, with the severity and nature of these barriers varying by job type. Drawn from both qualitative and quantitative findings across Jinja and Nakasongola districts, the analysis highlighted that structural challenges, such as insufficient financial support, limited land access, and climate variability, were consistently high in the green economy. However, barriers such as social stigma and a lack of family support were more pronounced in low-skilled roles, like waste collection and informal conservation work, while high-skilled roles, like solar engineering, were more affected by limited access to technical training and capital. The barriers have been categorised as High, Moderate, or Low and summarised according to their relative impact on both low and high-skilled green jobs (Table 2).

Table 2: Summary of barriers to youth engagement in green jobs by job type

Barriers	Low-skilled green jobs	High-skilled green jobs
Social stigma	High	Low
Insufficient financial support	High	High
Inadequate education and skills	Moderate	High
Lack of family support	High	Moderate
Future life uncertainties	Moderate	High
Cultural and social norms	Moderate	Low
Climate change and weather variability	High	High
Lack of clean energy alternatives	High	Moderate
Low environmental awareness	Moderate	Moderate
Limited and access	High	High
High population growth	High	Moderate

Source: *This table was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

Turning to the qualitative data, deeper insights emerged that help explain the patterns observed in the survey. Qualitative data highlighted significant themes that align with the quantitative findings, revealing the distinct and disproportionate obstacles young people face when pursuing green jobs. These insights enhance our comprehension of their motivations and challenges, providing valuable context and further supporting the findings where financial limitations consistently emerged as the most significant barrier to youth involvement in environmental conservation. The narratives that follow illustrate not only what young people experience, but why these barriers persist by being rooted in economic realities, social expectations, and unequal access to resources and opportunities. Many young people expressed frustration over the lack of funding for transportation, equipment, or participation in programmes, which often forced them to prioritise immediate survival needs or educational commitments over environmental activities. As one interviewee from Nakasongola district stated,

> *Young people face many obstacles in green jobs, starting with land. Engaging in agroforestry or large-scale tree planting is impossible without access to affordable land. Even when we have ideas, we lack the financial backing to start or expand projects* (KII with Chairperson LC III, Nabiswera sub-county, Nakasongola district).

Youth from lower-income households particularly emphasised that environmental projects were perceived as luxury activities rather than essential endeavours, with many prioritising paid employment over volunteer work in conservation efforts. This concern is reflected in the data, where lack of financial support stands as a major barrier for both genders, but is particularly pronounced for males in certain cases, reflecting the higher capital demands of some green jobs.

A recurring theme in the KIIs, particularly among female participants, was the lack of family support, a barrier more pronounced for women than men. Many females reported that their families often discouraged them from participating in environmental projects, viewing them as non-essential compared to pursuing traditional roles like caregiving or earning an income. One female FGD participant from Nakasongola district shared,

> *There is a stigma attached to green jobs. People think waste collection is for thieves or not legitimate work. This discourages young people from exploring these opportunities, even though they could earn an honest living while protecting the environment* (FGD with youth, Wabinyonyi sub-county, Nakasongola district).

This reinforces the cultural norms that shape the decisions of young people, especially women, in pursuing green jobs. Cultural norms emerged as a subtle but significant barrier, particularly for young women, who were expected to conform to roles that limited their public involvement. Several participants shared that in some communities, women's participation in public or outdoor activities including environmental conservation was often frowned upon, reinforcing societal pressures and discouraging women from taking part in environmental projects.

Additionally, future life uncertainties, such as marriage, education, and career transitions, were frequently cited as reasons why young people particularly females felt unable to commit long-term to environmental causes. As one male FGD participant from Jinja district stated,

> *Most of us have no access to land or funding, which is critical for starting green jobs. Even when we have good ideas, the lack of resources makes it almost impossible to turn them into reality (*FGD with youth, Wairaka Village, Bugembe sub-county, Jinja district).

They expressed concerns that investing in environmental efforts might conflict with their personal aspirations or future plans, such as relocating for work or furthering education. As the Mayor of Migyera Town Council noted,

> *The community looks down on waste collectors or other green job workers. They think it's not serious work. This discourages young people from participating, even though these jobs are essential for environmental protection* (KII with Mayor, Migyera Town Council, Nakasongola district).

These concerns highlight the uncertainty young people face regarding their futures, particularly when they feel that environmental projects might not align with their career goals or personal plans.

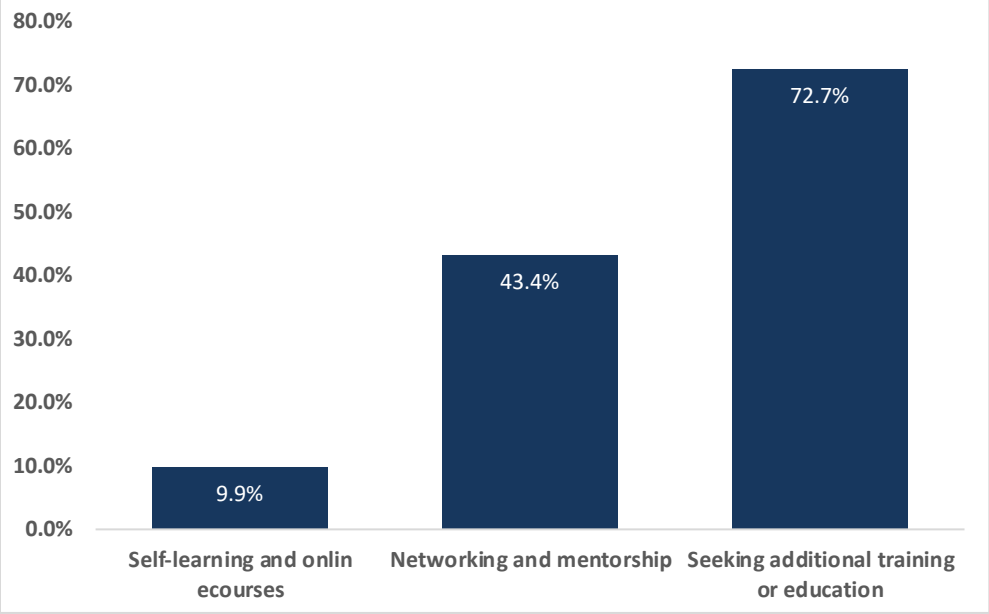
These qualitative insights, coupled with the data from the charts, affirm that the barriers to youth participation in environmental conservation are deeply rooted in socio-economic and cultural contexts. They underscore the need for targeted interventions that address not only the structural barriers, such as financial constraints and access to education, but also gender-specific challenges that limit women's involvement in public or professional environmental efforts.

Solutions to the unique/ disproportionate barriers

Potential solutions to conserve and restore the environment

Figure 21 illustrates the preferred methods for addressing obstacles in acquiring skills and knowledge. The most mentioned strategy was pursuing further training or education, with 72.7 percent of respondents indicating this preference. This highlights a strong interest in formal learning opportunities and organised educational pathways. It suggests that youth view institutional training as a credible and impactful route to overcoming skill gaps, likely due to the perceived structure, certification, and employment relevance that formal programmes offer.

Figure 21: Potential across all the levels of solutions to young people's involvement in activities to conserve and restore the environment



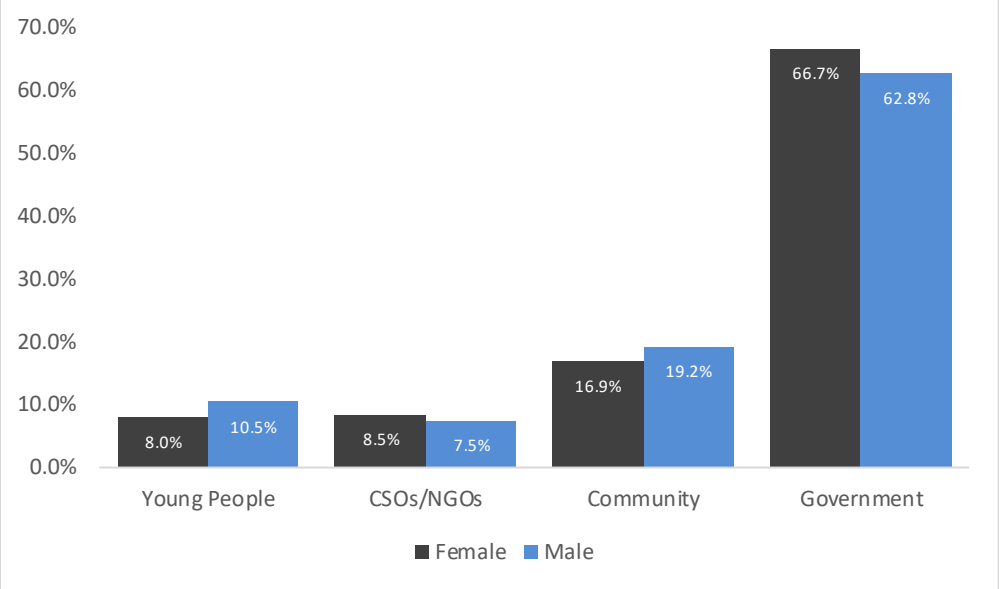
Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

The second most noted strategy was networking and mentorship, referenced by 43.4 percent of participants, implying that many individuals appreciate mentorship and the cultivation of professional relationships to develop their skills. This reflects a growing recognition of the role that guidance, peer learning, and exposure to successful role models play in fostering confidence, career direction, and access to opportunities particularly for youth with limited prior experience. Conversely, self-directed learning and online courses were the least popular, cited by only 9.9 percent of the respondents. This could be due to challenges related to digital accessibility, limited awareness, or a preference for more interactive and guided learning experiences. It may also signal scepticism toward the credibility of informal credentials or highlight barriers such as poor internet connectivity, lack of digital literacy, or limited motivation without structured support.

Respondents were further asked who they thought should take responsibility for overcoming the barriers to accessing activities that support environmental preservation and restoration. A majority pointed to the government as the primary actor, with 66.7 percent (134) of females and 62.8 percent (150) of males selecting this option. This indicates a strong consensus among both genders that government institutions should bear this responsibility. This likely reflects public expectations for governments to provide enabling policies, financial support, infrastructure, and environmental leadership especially in addressing systemic and large-scale challenges. It also suggests a potential dependency on institutional action that may limit grassroots mobilization if not paired with local empowerment strategies. Community involvement ranked second, with 19.2 percent (46) of male responses and 16.9 percent (34) of female responses acknowledging its importance, highlighting the necessity of local collective efforts in tackling environmental issues. This indicates moderate trust in local agency and reinforces the idea that solutions to environmental problems require both top-down and bottom-up collaboration. Conversely, young people were mentioned the least, appearing in only 10.5 percent (25) of male responses and 8.0 percent (16) of female responses. This suggests that although the youth

were recognised as important stakeholders, they were not viewed as primarily responsible for addressing the systemic barriers to environmental solutions, as shown in Figure 22.

Figure 22: Nature of support required for the young people to pursue environmental conservation and restoration activities



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

This perception may reflect limited confidence in youth capacity, or a lack of opportunities for youth-led engagement, and points to the need for stronger youth empowerment frameworks that emphasise shared responsibility and build agency through leadership and inclusion.

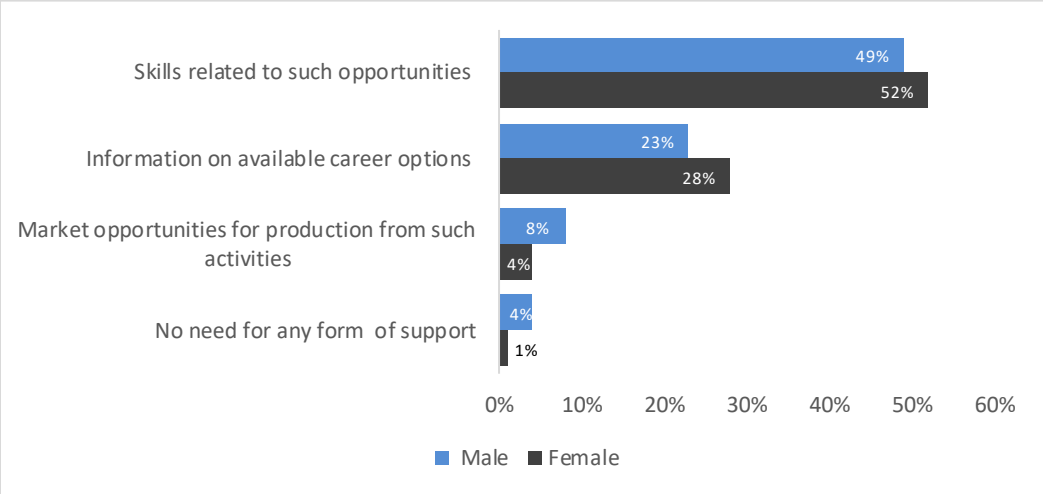
Nature of support required for the young people to pursue environmental conservation and restoration activities

As shown in Figure 23, skills necessary for participating in environmental activities were the most frequently mentioned support needed, with 52 percent of female and 49 percent of male respondents citing this. This underscores a significant recognition among both genders that developing skills is crucial for engaging in environmental initiatives. This may reflect not only a general awareness of the technical demands of environmental work such as sustainable farming, waste management, or ecosystem restoration, but also a gap in access to quality training opportunities at the local level.

The second most reported support was guidance on available career options, identified by 28 percent of female and 23 percent of male respondents, emphasising a collective demand for clearer direction and increased career awareness. This suggests that while interest in environmental work exists, many of the youth lack a clear understanding of viable career paths or how to transition from learning to earning within the green economy. Fewer respondents cited market opportunities related to these activities, with just 8 percent from males and 4 percent from females indicating that market access is was less of a concern than skill development and information access. This may imply limited experience with selling environmental products or services, or that youth remain in the early stages of participation where foundational knowledge takes precedence over commercialisation.

Lastly, only 1 percent of female and 4 percent of male respondents expressed that they had no need for support, indicating that the majority acknowledged a requirement for assistance in at least one area. This broad consensus highlights the importance of targeted interventions that build capacity, increase visibility of green career pathways, and bridge the gap between environmental action and economic opportunity.

Figure 23: Nature of support required for the young people to pursue environmental conservation and restoration activities



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

In discussing these issues, the subsequent qualitative data highlighted personal experiences and insights from participants, underlining the support necessary for young individuals to engage in environmental conservation and restoration. In both the FGDs and KIIs, youth consistently emphasised the need for hands-on, practical training as the most crucial support for participating in environmental conservation and green jobs. Many emphasised that while they have theoretical knowledge about environmental issues, they often lack the practical skills necessary for making meaningful contributions. As one female FGD participant from Jinja City shared,

> *Training youth in recycling and sustainable agriculture is essential for building a better future. We need more workshops and community-based programmes to equip us with the skills to care for our environment. Education and hands-on training are key to making a lasting impact, and many of us are eager to learn and take action* (FGD with youth, Wairaka Village, Bugembe sub-county, Jinja City).

This sentiment was echoed by others, who stressed that practical, on-the-ground training is critical for fostering a long-term commitment to environmental sustainability, particularly in sustainable agriculture and waste management. As the Area Manager National Forestry Authority, from Nakasongola district elaborated, when he emphasised the broader community benefits of such training:

> *It's crucial to provide hands-on training to the youth on waste management and sustainable farming practices. Workshops and educational campaigns can help raise awareness in our communities, and many of us feel that these programmes will empower us to make real changes. We need more opportunities to learn how to*

> *protect the environment while improving our livelihoods* (KII with National Forestry Authority Area Manager, Katuugo, Nakasongola district).

This highlights the intersection between environmental action and economic empowerment, with youth recognising that environmental training can also enhance their livelihoods by opening up new job opportunities and creating sustainable business models, particularly in sustainable farming and recycling industries.

Similarly, one male participant from Jinja district emphasised the importance of training programmes in helping youth understand their role in protecting the environment and contributing to solutions:

> *The importance of training programmes cannot be overstated. To address environmental challenges effectively, we need more workshops that teach recycling, waste management, and sustainable agriculture. These educational campaigns will help us understand our role in protecting the environment and give us the tools to contribute to solutions actively* (FGD with youth, Budhumbuli Village, Mafubira sub-county, Jinja district).

This response reflected the desire of the youth not only to learn but also to apply the skills they acquired to make practical contributions to environmental sustainability in their communities.

While the need for training was emphasised, many youth participants also discussed the critical role of government and NGOs in supporting their efforts. One male FGD participant from Nakasongola district pointed out,

> *The government needs to play a bigger role in supporting environmental efforts. Financial assistance is crucial for youth-led projects, and there should be better monitoring of activities to ensure they are effective. We also need stronger enforcement of environmental laws to protect our resources. NGOs are essential in providing the training and resources we need to continue this work* (FGD with youth, Nabiswera sub-county, Nakasongola district).

This statement underscored the recognition among youth that while government policy, financial support, and law enforcement are necessary for scaling up green initiatives, NGOs play an equally important role by providing hands-on training and resources that directly impact local communities.

Echoing this, a female FGD from Nakasongola district participant added,

> *We believe that the government and NGOs must increase their support for environmental initiatives. The government should provide financial backing and enforce stricter environmental laws, while NGOs are crucial in offering training, resources, and continuous sensitization to keep the community engaged and informed. Together, they can help make a real difference* (FGD Participant, Migeera Town Council, Katuugo Village, Nakasongola district).

This emphasises the need for a collaborative approach between government bodies and NGOs to ensure that youth have the resources, training, and policy support necessary to pursue green jobs effectively and sustainably.

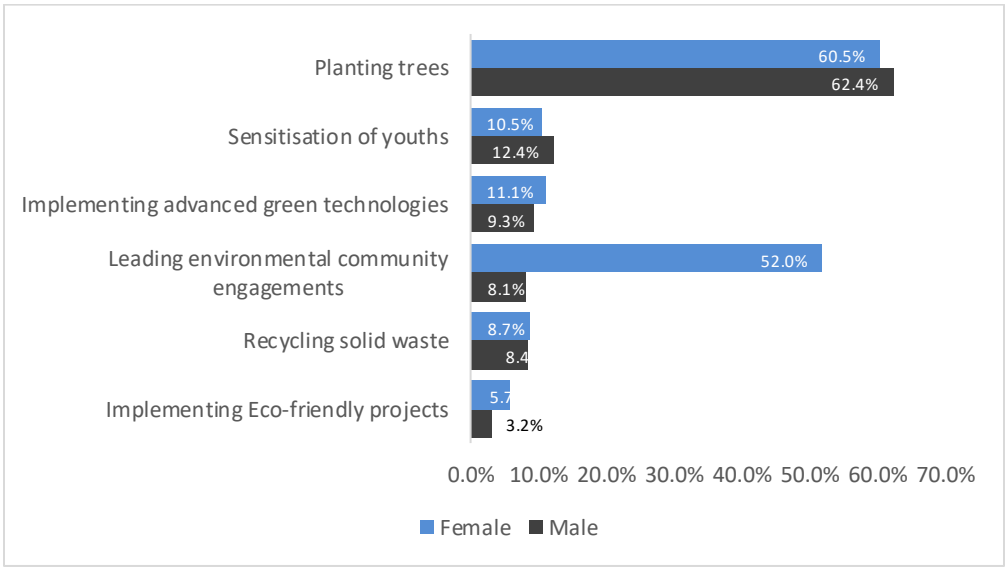
The youth were also keenly aware of the economic opportunities green jobs can bring, provided that the right training and market access are made available. The combination of

skills development, financial assistance, and policy enforcement emerged as key themes that could enable youth to transition from awareness to action in environmental conservation efforts. Their feedback underscored the necessity of holistic support systems from local workshops to national policies that can empower youth not only to understand environmental challenges, but also to actively engage in addressing them, thereby fostering both sustainable environmental change and economic growth in their communities.

Medium-term prospects for youth involvement in environmental conservation and restoration activities

As Figure 24 illustrates, tree planting was the most frequently cited activity for both males and females regarding their medium-term (5–10 year) environmental conservation and restoration commitments. It was mentioned by 62.4 percent of males and 60.5 percent of females, underscoring a strong common interest in reforestation efforts. This widespread prioritisation of tree planting may reflect its perceived accessibility, visible impact, and familiarity as a community-driven environmental intervention. The second most referenced activity was leading community environmental engagements, noted by 52.0 percent of females but only 8.1 percent of males, revealing a significantly greater focus on community leadership among females. This strong female interest in participatory and mobilisation roles could be influenced by their central role in household and community dynamics, as well as a preference for socially oriented rather than physically intensive or technical roles. It also signals the potential for empowering women as facilitators of behavioural change and community-driven environmental action. Following that, youth sensitisation appeared in 12.4 percent of female responses and 10.5 percent of male responses, indicating moderate attention from both genders toward awareness-raising initiatives. Other activities, including recycling solid waste, integrating advanced green technologies, and initiating eco-friendly projects, received less mention. Male responses indicated a slightly greater interest in technical roles, especially in advanced green technologies and eco-friendly projects, than their female counterparts. This may reflect gendered exposure to technical training or societal encouragement for men to engage in innovation-oriented tasks.

Figure 24: Medium-term prospects for youth involvement in environmental conservation and restoration activities



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

These results imply that while both genders regarded tree planting as a primary activity, females placed greater emphasis on community mobilisation and awareness. In contrast, males exhibited more interest in technical and innovative environmental solutions. This division points to the importance of designing gender-responsive programmes that align with each group's strengths and interests, while also ensuring equal access to training, leadership roles, and technological engagement across genders.

These findings were confirmed by the qualitative data which indicated that young people's prioritisation of tree planting as their most preferred environmental activity reflected more than just environmental awareness. It was deeply rooted in practicality and familiarity. Discussions from FGDs revealed that tree planting was widely seen as achievable with minimal resources and did not require external permission or advanced skills. Youth described it as a "doable" action, often introduced in school clubs or community clean-ups. For many, it symbolises an immediate and visible contribution to restoring their environment. However, even with this enthusiasm, barriers persist. Participants consistently pointed out that land access and financial limitations make it difficult to scale up such initiatives. As one local leader explained,

> *Young people face many obstacles in green jobs, starting with land. Engaging in agroforestry or large-scale tree planting is impossible without access to affordable land. Even when we have ideas, we lack the financial backing to start or expand projects* (KII with Chairperson, JROP Village, Walukuba sub-county, Jinja City).

This strong preference for tree planting was further shaped by lived experiences of environmental degradation. Youth and community leaders frequently linked increased heat, changing rainfall patterns, and biodiversity loss to deforestation. As one youth councillor from Jinja City described,

> *Rainfall patterns have changed significantly over the past 3–5 years… now it is erratic. When it rains, it sometimes comes with storms that damage crops, houses, and infrastructure* (KII with Youth Councillor, Works Village, Walukuba sub-county, Jinja City).

These changes not only make agriculture unpredictable but also deepen the urgency of environmental restoration.

Another local leader from Jinja City shared,

> *Vegetation cover has decreased significantly due to deforestation… biodiversity loss has become more evident… soil erosion is making it harder for the community to maintain productive farmland* (KII with Chairperson, JROP Village, Walukuba sub-county, Jinja City).

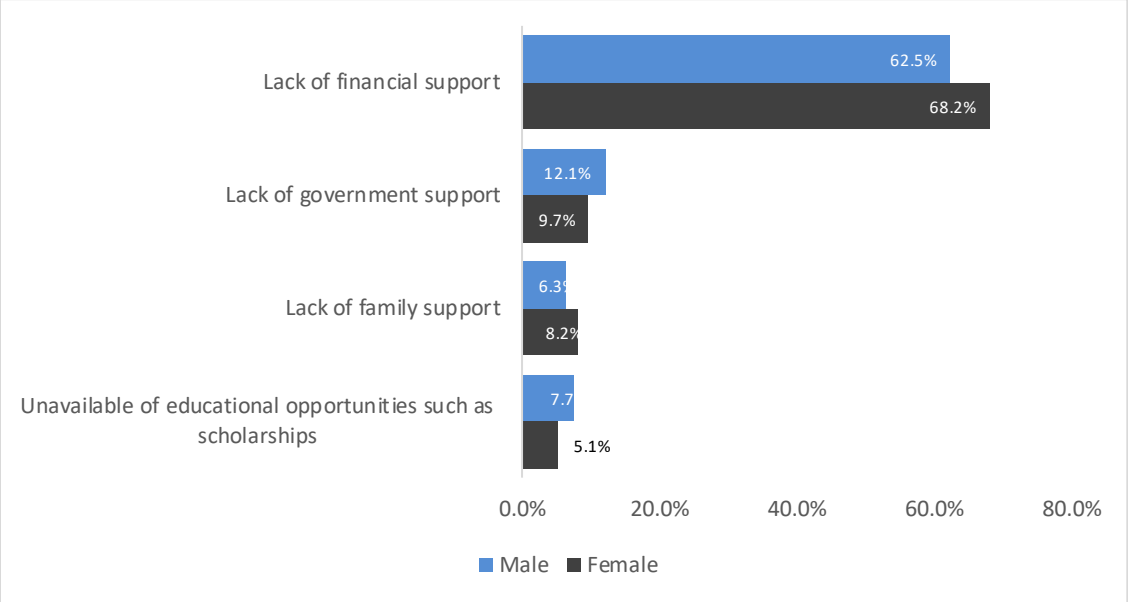
Such experiences reinforced the perception that local action, like planting trees, was necessary and urgent, especially as global environmental issues appeared distant or beyond local control.

Barriers to young people's medium-term educational aspirations

As illustrated in Figure 25, survey participants indicated that insufficient financial support was the main obstacle to realising their medium-term (5–10 years) educational goals, with 68.2 percent of female respondents and 62.5 percent of male respondents identifying it as

the most serious challenge. This showed a shared belief that financial limitations were the most critical barrier for both genders in achieving educational aspirations. This could reflect widespread economic hardship, high tuition costs, and limited access to personal or institutional funding mechanisms particularly in rural or under-resourced areas. The slightly higher concern among females may also point to greater economic vulnerability or fewer opportunities for financial autonomy for young women.

Figure 25: Barriers to young people's medium-term educational aspirations



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

The second most frequently mentioned obstacle was the lack of governmental assistance, reported by 12.1 percent of males and 9.7 percent of females, reflecting the view that government financial support is also a vital consideration. This suggested that there were unmet expectations regarding public investment in youth education, including scholarships, loans, or subsidised programmes that could alleviate private financial burdens.

Family support was noted by 8.2 percent of females and 6.3 percent of males, emphasising the importance of familial encouragement in education. The gender gap here may reflect social or cultural factors where female educational pursuits are more likely to require explicit family approval or logistical support (e.g., for transport, childcare, or relocation). The least reported barrier was the lack of educational opportunities like scholarships, which was mentioned by 7.7 percent of males and 5.1 percent of females as a constraint. Although least mentioned, this still points to gaps in awareness or availability of targeted financial aid schemes, especially for youth who are motivated but underinformed about how to access them.

Turning to the qualitative data, insights from focus group discussions highlighted financial constraints as the most pressing barrier to educational advancement, with nearly all youth identifying it as a major challenge. Many explained that they had to drop out due to an inability to pay fees, buy school materials, or afford transportation. For girls, the situation was often compounded by cultural norms that prioritise boys' education or pressure young women into early marriage. For instance, one female FGD participant from Jinja district noted, '*I dropped out in Senior Two because my parents couldn't afford the school fees. They*

said my brother's education was more important since he's a boy (FGD with youth, Bugobya Village, Busedde sub-county, Jinja district).

Another male FGD participant from Jinja district added, '*Even when I wanted to study, there was no money for books or transport. My parents told me to wait and get married instead* (FGD with youth, Wanyanye Village, Bugembe Sub-County, Jinja district). Several girls shared that while they aspired to continue their studies, they lacked support at home, and their educational goals were seen as less urgent. This reality aligns with survey data that shows a slightly higher percentage of females citing financial support as a barrier, reflecting not just poverty but also how gender shapes access to educational opportunity.

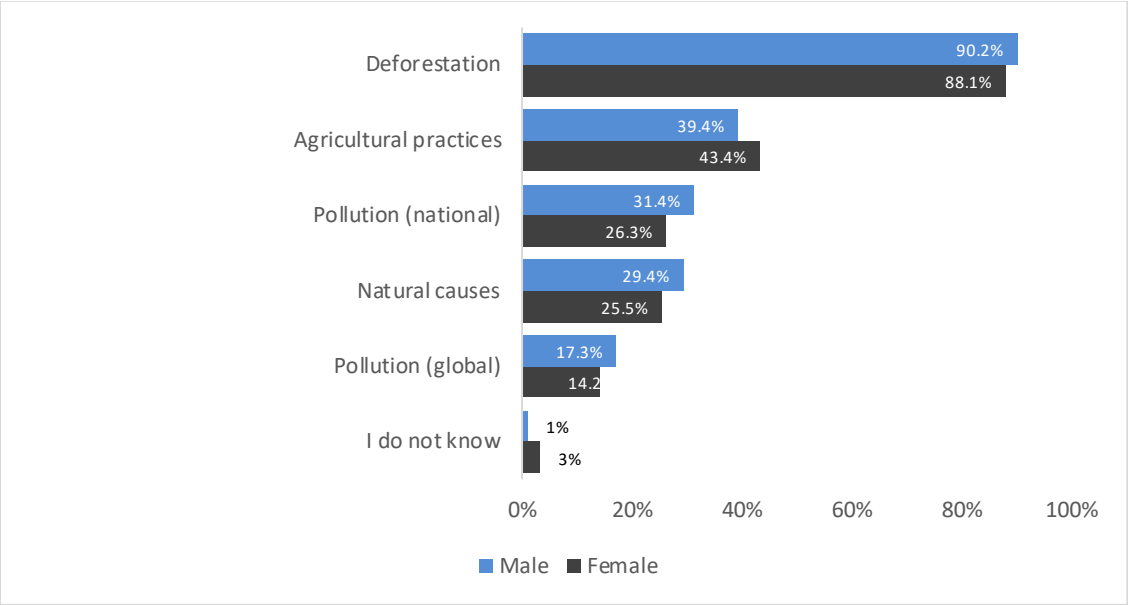
Observed environmental changes and navigating barriers to conservation and restoration

Youth perceptions on the causes of environmental changes in their area

The survey data reveal that deforestation was the most mentioned environmental issue, cited by 90.2 percent of male respondents and 88.1 percent of female respondents (see Figure 26). This reflects a common recognition among both males and females regarding deforestation as the foremost environmental challenge. This probably stems from the direct and visible impact deforestation has on local ecosystems, agriculture, and livelihoods, particularly in rural communities where tree cover loss is associated with soil erosion, declining rainfall, and reduced fuelwood availability.

The second most reported concern was agricultural practices, noted by 43.4 percent of female respondents and 39.4 percent of male respondents, indicating its perceived effect on environmental decline. This suggests increasing awareness of unsustainable land use, such as overgrazing, excessive chemical input, and slash-and-burn practices, which may degrade land productivity and biodiversity over time. Global pollution was mentioned the least, with only 17.3 percent of males and 14.2 percent of females citing it, implying it receives less attention compared to more localised environmental concerns. This may indicate that global-scale environmental challenges are perceived as less relevant or harder to influence at the community level, compared to immediate issues like deforestation or local pollution. An interesting result was the small percentage of respondents who chose *"I do not know"* as their response. Ony 1 percent of males and 3 percent of females selected this option which suggests a certain level of environmental awareness among participants. This high awareness level provides a strong foundation for community-driven environmental action, particularly if linked with capacity-building, information access, and targeted interventions.

Figure 26: Youth perceptions of the main causes of environmental changes in their areas

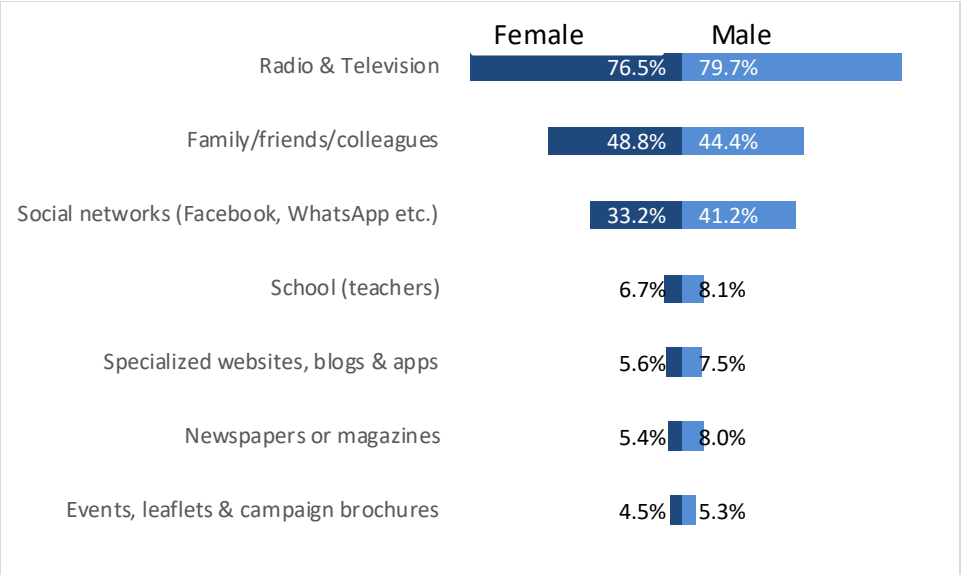


Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

Sources of climate change information for the youth

When participants were asked about their two main sources of climate change information, radio and television emerged as the most frequently cited source, with 79.7 percent of males and 76.5 percent of females naming it. The second most mentioned sources were family, friends, and colleagues, with 48.8 percent of females and 44.4 percent of males turning to their personal networks for information. These findings underscored the significant role of traditional media and personal networks in the spread of climate change information, as illustrated in Figure 28. The dominance of radio and television suggests these are not only accessible but trusted platforms, especially in rural or lower-income settings where internet access may be limited. Meanwhile, reliance on social networks for information highlighted the value of interpersonal communication in shaping perceptions and spreading awareness, particularly where formal educational outreach is minimal. In addition to these sources, the data indicated that young participants in the study gathered climate change information through multiple channels. These included personal observations of weather patterns and seasonal changes, village meetings, community events like funerals, NGOs, and community radio. This reflected a blend of experiential learning, cultural practices, and institutional outreach, indicating that climate literacy is shaped as much by lived experience and informal gatherings as by structured media. Other noted sources included specialist websites, newspapers, events, and schools, highlighting the continued prominence of traditional and interpersonal channels, along with an increasing reliance on social media.

Figure 27: Main sources of climate change information for the youth



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

This mixed media landscape implies that while digital tools are emerging, outreach efforts must still prioritise conventional and community-based communication formats to ensure inclusive and localised dissemination of climate-related information.

Expanding on the quantitative findings, insights from qualitative interviews shed light on the lived experiences of young people and local leaders in relation to environmental degradation and the obstacles to conservation and restoration efforts. Participants from various communities across Walukuba sub-county in Jinja City reported noticeable environmental changes over the past 3–5 years, attributing much of the shift to human activity and climate variability. A recurring concern was the rise in temperature, which was linked to deforestation. As one male Local Council One Chairperson from Jinja City noted,

> *In the past few years, the community has noticed a noticeable increase in temperature levels. This temperature rise is primarily due to the massive cutting down of trees. As the forest cover decreases, the land loses its natural cooling effect, leading to more extreme weather patterns. This change has significantly impacted agricultural activities, making it harder for farmers to grow crops and sustain their livelihoods* (KII with Local Council One Chairperson, JROP Village, Walukuba sub-county, Jinja City).

Such observations underscore the direct link between forest loss and worsening climatic conditions that compromise food security.

Another participant, a male Youth Councillor from Nakasongola district, emphasised the growing unpredictability of rainfall:

> *Rainfall patterns have changed significantly over the past 3–5 years. We could predict when the rains would come in the past, but now it is erratic. When it rains, it sometimes comes with storms that damage crops, houses, and infrastructure. This unpredictability has made it difficult for farmers to plan, leading to reduced harvests and food insecurity* (KII with Male Youth Councillor and Minister for ICT in the Buruli Kingdom, Nakasongola district).

His remarks point to the dual burden of environmental instability and its economic consequences, particularly for smallholder farmers.

Equally concerning were reports of significant vegetation loss due to deforestation and encroachment on natural ecosystems. A male local Chairperson observed from Jinja district,

> *Most of the green cover is gone, and the community has encroached on natural areas like swamps. As a result, biodiversity loss has become more evident, with many species of plants and animals disappearing. This degradation of natural habitats is also contributing to soil erosion, making it harder for the community to maintain productive farmland* (KII with Chairperson, JROP Village, Walukuba sub-county, Jinja City).

These accounts reflect a growing awareness of the consequences of environmental neglect, coupled with an urgent need for targeted support and sustainable practices to restore ecological balance.

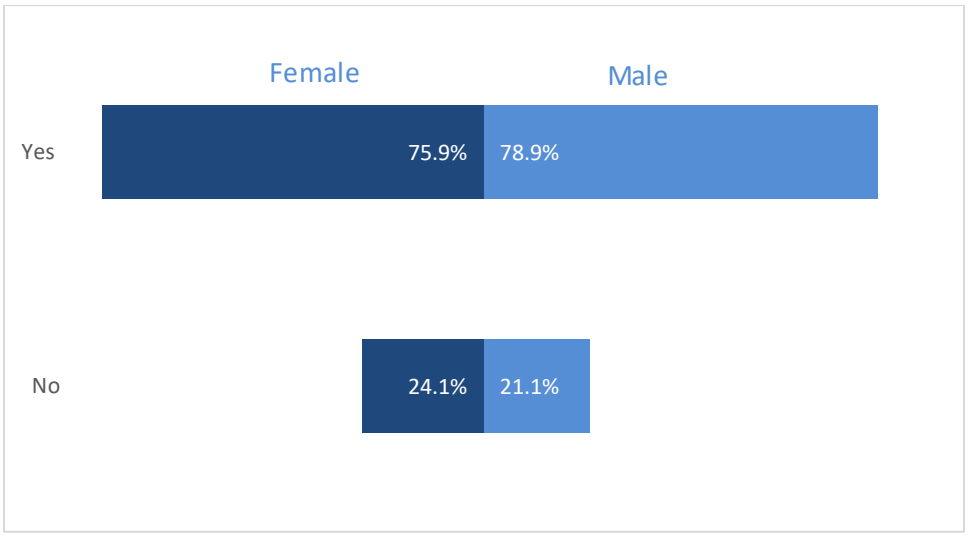
Together, these testimonies highlight the interconnection between climate change, environmental degradation, and community vulnerability, emphasising the importance of youth-led action and locally informed solutions in driving effective conservation and restoration efforts.

Policy and green job opportunities in Jinja and Nakasongola districts

Youth awareness of the environmental conservation and restoration policies

To assess the understanding of policies affecting young people's access to green job opportunities in the studied areas, respondents were asked about their awareness of environmental conservation and restoration policies. Most indicated they were aware. Specifically, 78.9 percent (235) of males and 75.9 percent (227) of females answered "Yes." In comparison, 21.1 percent (63) of males and 24.1 percent (72) of females replied "No." This reflected a slightly higher awareness of the policies among males than females, although the difference was minor, as illustrated in Figure 28.

Figure 28: Youth awareness of the environmental conservation and restoration policies

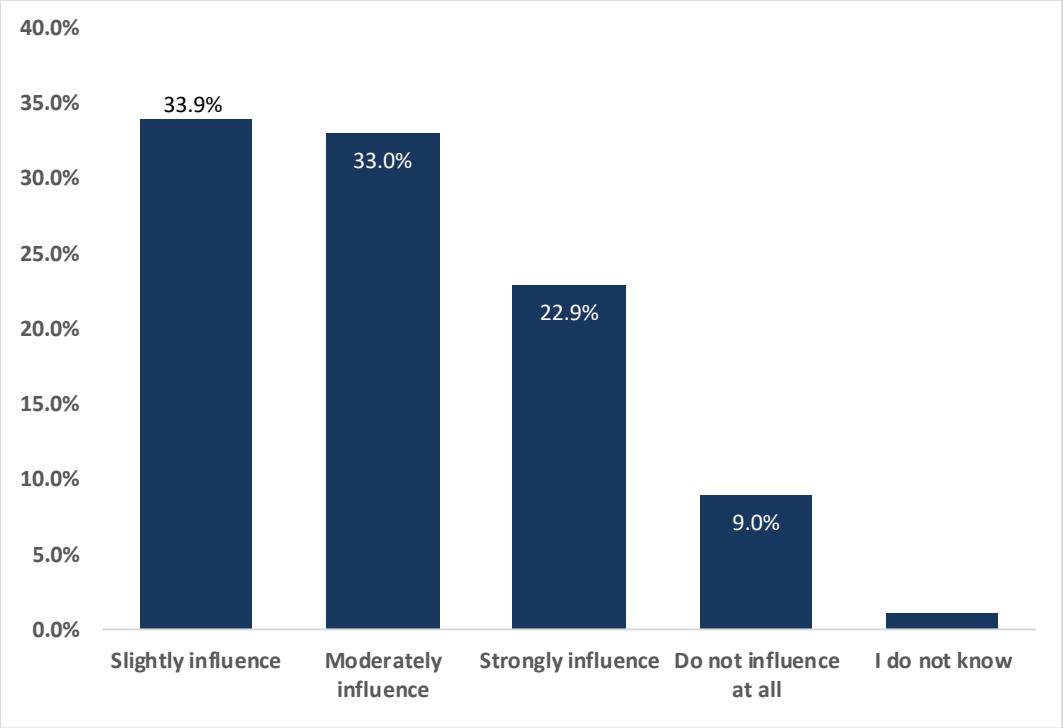


Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

The high awareness rate suggests that environmental policies are relatively visible within these communities probably because of media campaigns, community sensitisation, or the integration of conservation messaging into local initiatives. However, the small gender gap may signal differences in access to information sources, engagement levels in policy discussions, or formal education exposure. Understanding not only that youth are aware, but also how deeply they understand the content and implications of these policies, is crucial for ensuring that such awareness translates into informed participation and advocacy in the green sector.

In addition, respondents shared their opinions on how existing policies and regulations affect environmental conservation and restoration. A substantial majority, 89.8 percent (400), felt that these policies and regulations had a moderate, slight, or strong impact on conservation and restoration efforts. Conversely, 9.0 percent (40) believed that the policies did not influence these efforts at all. The least common response, "I do not know," was selected by only 1.1 percent (5) of respondents, suggesting that very few were unsure about the impact of these policies, as highlighted in Figure 29.

Figure 29: Young people's views on the influence of the existing policies and regulations on environmental conservation and restoration



Source: *This graph was generated by the report authors based on their calculations of primary data*

This widespread belief in at least some degree of policy impact reflected a general recognition of the role that formal governance plays in shaping environmental practices. It may also indicate that conservation policies are visible at the community level through enforcement programmes, or public messaging even if their effectiveness is perceived as limited. The 9.0 percent who viewed policies as having no impact could reflect disillusionment with policy implementation or gaps between legislation and tangible outcomes. Meanwhile, the very low uncertainty rate (1.1 percent) suggests a commendable level of engagement and opinion formation on environmental governance among youth, even if perceptions vary on the degree of influence.

When discussing policy and green jobs, qualitative insights from focus groups and key informant interviews revealed a shared perception that, while environmental policies and programmes exist, their implementation and inclusivity remain limited. Many participants expressed frustration over the lack of follow-up and support for youth-led conservation initiatives. A youth leader district from Nakasongola district noted,

> *While government programmes like NAADS provide seedlings for tree planting, there's little follow-up or support to ensure these projects succeed. Many young people abandon them halfway because policies lack enforcement or incentives to keep them engaged* (KII with a male youth leader from Migyera Town Council in Nakasongola district).

This lack of implementation and local relevance was echoed by others.

> *Policies exist, but they do not reach us on the ground. For instance, NEMA has regulations about tree planting, but there's no follow-up to ensure they're enforced. This leaves many projects incomplete or abandoned* (KII with Chairperson, Migyera Town Council, Nakasongola district).

Participants emphasised that while policies such as the Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy and the National Forestry Policy promote sustainable land use and green employment, they often overlook practical mechanisms for youth engagement and accountability in implementation.

Participants also called for more youth-centred incentives and support mechanisms. A key informant in Jinja district suggested,

> *If policies were implemented effectively, more young people would get involved in green projects. For instance, tax breaks on green products could motivate many to start small businesses* (KII with Head Teacher, Kasozi Primary School, Busedde, Jinja district).

Another echoed this view, saying,

> *If policies were designed with youth in mind, we'd see more progress. For example, offering small grants for green jobs or training programmes could greatly increase participation and success* (KII with Opinion Leader, Wanyange Parish, Mafubira Sub-County).

These comments highlight the untapped potential of youth in driving green growth and conservation efforts if policies are translated into actionable, well-funded programmes tailored to youth needs.

Collectively, these insights emphasise that bridging the gap between national policy and local practice is essential. Without clear enforcement, targeted investment, and youth-inclusive planning, even the most progressive policies risk remaining abstract documents, disconnected from the lived realities and potential of young people across Uganda.

6. Conclusion and policy recommendations

This research explored the career aspirations, motivations, and challenges faced by youth in Jinja and Nakasongola districts regarding green job opportunities, focusing on environmental conservation and restoration. The study revealed a significant gap between the career aspirations of young people and the realities of their current employment situations. While most of the youth expressed strong interest in environmentally responsible jobs such as tree planting, organic farming, and sustainability efforts, their involvement in these fields was hindered by several barriers.

The study also reflected some of the gaps in young people's comprehension of green jobs, as many linked them to activities like tree planting and waste collection. This view mirrored larger global issues, where green jobs are often misunderstood as solely environmentally focused. For example, Griswold 2018 highlighted the importance of reinterpreting green jobs to reflect a combination of ecological and economic advantages, encompassing varied sectors such as renewable energy, waste-to-energy projects, and sustainable agriculture. In Uganda, misconceptions regarding green job prospects have been noted, emphasising the urgent need for awareness campaigns (Mwaura and Glover 2021).

The study also revealed gender disparities in environmental job participation. While both men and women showed a strong commitment to environmental conservation, their engagement in green jobs varied. Men were more likely to participate in physically demanding and large-scale restoration activities such as wetland reclamation and erosion control, while women tended to focus more on organic agriculture and waste management. This division reflected traditional gender roles and emphasised the need for targeted strategies to encourage women's participation across all facets of green jobs, particularly in male-dominated fields.

The findings align with research from the United Nations Development Programme study of 2015, which illustrated barriers restricting women to small-scale, resource-limited initiatives like recycling. Similar obstacles in Ethiopia and India underscore the global nature of these issues. Nevertheless, Rwanda's achievements with women's cooperatives in green sectors demonstrate how targeted grants and training programmes can help close gender gaps. Gender-sensitive strategies like these could significantly enhance women's involvement in Uganda's green economy, alongside gender-equitable policies, access to resources, and training, all of which are essential to creating an inclusive and diverse green economy.

Key obstacles to the youth accessing green jobs, included inadequate education, financial constraints, limited access to training, and a lack of institutional support, particularly in rural regions. These barriers not only impeded the ability of youth to access green jobs but also reflected broader socio-economic issues such as unemployment and limited livelihood opportunities, exacerbating the challenge of pursuing a career in the green economy. Such barriers reflected both national and international trends. According to the World Bank, financial constraints significantly hinder youth in Uganda, especially in informal sectors (World Bank 2019). Environmental issues like erratic weather and deforestation further impede essential green job initiatives such as sustainable farming and tree planting. The National Environment Management Authority also indicates that climate variability adversely affects Uganda's green job sectors, reflecting findings from Malawi and Mozambique (National Environment Management Authority 2021). To overcome these

obstacles, integrated strategies are necessary, including financial assistance, skill enhancement, and climate adaptation measures.

Despite facing the above challenges, the study highlighted the aspirations among youth to merge environmental conservation with economic endeavours. Many participants considered green jobs as essential pathways to sustainable livelihoods. However, despite this 81.6 percent of participants reported not being engaged in their dream job, pointing to a significant disconnect between youth aspirations and the opportunities available to them.

This interest in green jobs and entrepreneurship is reflected throughout Africa, especially in fields like renewable energy, recycling, and eco-friendly product creation (Slavova, Heuër, and Agster 2015). Uganda's Green Economy Initiative and initiatives in Ghana and the Philippines illustrate how focused training, mentorship, and financial support can empower young people. For example, the Philippines' Green Jobs Act offers tax benefits and skills training, could be a model that Uganda might follow (Republic of Philippines 2016).

The research found that youth have a moderate awareness of existing environmental policies. However, the effectiveness and inclusivity of these policies remain limited. While policies exist, they are often not implemented at the local level or tailored to the specific needs of youth, especially those in rural areas. For example, Uganda's Green Growth Development Strategy (FAO 2017) sets ambitious goals for green jobs, yet its effectiveness has been hindered by weak enforcement and insufficient grassroots integration.

A review by Bbaale et al. 2023 also indicated that many of the youth, especially in rural regions, struggle to access resources driven by these policies. Similar issues in Tanzania and Zambia underscore the necessity for strong policy frameworks that reflect local conditions. This study in Uganda therefore underscores the need for more robust policy enforcement, targeted investment, and youth-centred incentives. Policies should address the specific barriers young people face, particularly those related to financial access, skills development, and land ownership. To achieve success, enhancing Uganda's institutional capacity and focusing on youth-centred policy implementation is essential.

The study highlighted the combined efforts of the government and the community in overcoming obstacles to engaging in green jobs. Initiatives led by the government, such as the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), have potential but need better follow-up and coordination (Ssanyu and Mubiru 2021). Community efforts, such as those by organisations like Tree Talk Plus, demonstrate the effectiveness of collective action for environmental conservation and creating green jobs. On an international scale, Kenya's Green Economy Strategy and Rwanda's grassroots initiatives illustrate the advantages of blending government support with community mobilisation to promote sustainable livelihoods.

The research identified climate change, deforestation, and unpredictable weather patterns as significant environmental concerns among youth. These challenges greatly affect young people's ability to participate in conservation and restoration efforts. Financial limitations were consistently noted as the most significant barrier, followed by a lack of education and family support.

In conclusion, while young people in Uganda demonstrate strong environmental awareness and a keen interest in engaging in sustainable practices, particularly tree planting and organic farming. They are eager to contribute to environmental sustainability through green jobs, but face significant challenges that need to be addressed with comprehensive and

multi-faceted solutions. Financial assistance, skills development, improved access to resources, along with practical opportunities to turn their aspirations into reality, are essential to enable the youth to engage in green industries.

Moreover, the government, NGOs, and community leaders must collaborate to create an environment that supports young people. This includes providing mentorship, training, and financial support to foster the growth of a vibrant and sustainable green economy. By tackling these systemic barriers and equipping youth with the necessary tools, Uganda can unlock the potential of its young population, promoting a green economy that drives both environmental and economic sustainability for the future.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations emerged:

- **Undertake policy reform, enforcement and incentivisation**
  - The Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development should involve young people in the formulation, review and implementation of gender-responsive policies and mentorship programmes to facilitate young women's entry into green jobs. Such policies should provide a favourable environment for investing in green jobs and related activities. These policies must also contain the necessary investment incentives to facilitate green job creation.
  - The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) should implement the National Agriculture Policy (2013) that promotes sustainable agricultural practices such and ensuring dedicated budget allocations for green skills training and job creation initiatives. The policy also provides a framework for the implementation of climate-smart agricultural interventions that incorporate advanced weather prediction systems, adaptive farming techniques, drought-resistant seed distribution and improved irrigation technologies to strengthen resilience and sustainability.
  - District Local Governments (DLGs) should localise green economy policies at the district level. This will enable co-designing and operationalising the existing youth platforms to actively engage young people in local job creation and environmental policymaking.
- **Implement gender inclusive programming**
  - The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development should implement policies and programmes that address gender barriers in green employment.
  -
- **Ensure financial inclusion and create enterprise development**
  - The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should provide youth-specific green enterprise financing (such as grants and low-interest loans) to support the activities of young people involved in green jobs.
  - Government, the private sector and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) should support the implementation of tree planting and related afforestation programmes by distributing high-quality seedlings to young people across the country. The move will not only contribute to the restoration and conservation of forest cover but also play a role in combating soil erosion, enhancing biodiversity and supporting community livelihoods.
  - Government programmes such as the Parish Development Model (PDM) should provide financial support to young people and other enterprising farmers to

access the required financing for engagement in green jobs and related climate adaptation and mitigation projects.

- **Expand skills training, education reform and create awareness**
  - The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development should in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports lead the development of targeted interventions to support young people to access green job opportunities and pursue their career aspirations.
  - Government and other stakeholders should also expand green skills training through vocational education and apprenticeships.
  - The National Planning Authority (NPA) should provide clear indicators in the National Development Plan (NDP-IV) on the development parameters for creating green jobs for sustainable development. Such parameters should specify the required budget allocations for green jobs and climate-resilient infrastructure in the national budget framework papers.
- **Undertake further research**
  - *On policy enforcement and the role of local government.* Although Uganda has introduced various policies to promote green jobs, the report highlights that weak enforcement of these policies restricts their effectiveness. Future research could explore the functioning of policy enforcement mechanisms, and the role of local governments in ensuring that green job initiatives are fully implemented, especially for youth in rural areas.
  - *On financing and resource access for youth-led green initiatives.* This would explore young people's challenges when trying to secure financial resources and land for green projects. It would also examine the effectiveness of microloans, grants, and other financial mechanisms aimed at supporting youth entrepreneurship within the green economy. The insights gained from this exploration would be valuable to identify ways to unlock economic opportunities for young individuals in sustainable sectors.
  - *Integration of green skills into curricula.* This would explore the critical role of formal and informal education in equipping young people with the skills necessary for success in green jobs. It would evaluate existing green skills training programmes and investigate opportunities for their expansion or incorporation into the national education system. The aim would be to ensure that educational curricula are more effectively aligned with the evolving demands of the green economy.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: English consent form

Introduction

The Green Jobs research contributes to preserving or restoring the environment and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These opportunities include those in briquette making, recycling plastic materials, and agroforestry. Supported by generous funding from Cambridge University, this research project represents a significant investment in advancing knowledge and understanding of the green jobs sector in Uganda.

Back ground information

The government is also promoting renewable energy development, focusing on hydropower and solar power. The country developed the Renewable Energy Policy for Uganda, which aims to achieve 61% of its electricity generation from renewable sources by 2017, up from 4%.

Despite these initiatives, challenges remain in promoting green jobs and youth employment in Uganda. Limited access to finance, inadequate skills and training, and a lack of opportunities for young people in rural areas are some of the barriers that need to be addressed. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the economy, with many businesses closing down, leading to job losses.

Therefore, this shows that, as a country, we are progressing towards green jobs and addressing youth unemployment. However, more needs to be done to promote sustainable green employment for young people in Uganda.

What the participant would be asked to do

If the participants agree to participate in this interview, they will be asked to sign this consent form to confirm their acceptance and will be asked some questions verbally. The interview will take about 30-45 minutes. To keep time and to obtain an accurate record of what you have to say, I request to interview you with my colleague, who will write out important notes about our discussion. I also request recording the interview to capture your responses accurately. The study will only ask you for information that is familiar to you. Its accuracy will rely on the accuracy of the information you give. Interviews will be expected to last for an average of one hour.

Risks and benefits of being in the study

This study is purely for policy and learning purposes. It may or may not benefit you directly, immediately or even at all. There is no guarantee that anybody will benefit from this study because the issues to be discussed depend on decisions to be taken by many levels. However, if the policymakers find the results useful and make policies favourable to health workers,

then all health workers (you inclusive) and the entire population will benefit from the study.

Moreover, apart from the time you will spend during this discussion, this study carries no risks to you. Please feel free to answer any questions you are comfortable with and refuse to answer those you are uncomfortable with. You are free to accept to participate, to refuse to participate, or even to withdraw your participation at any time during the interview, with no risk of penalisation by anybody.

Confidentiality

The information obtained from you will only be accessible to the researcher. Although your name will be recorded, it will not be published in the findings. Instead, a code number will be used to identify and track your information. The data collected will be safely locked away. All the data will be safely destroyed five years after the study. The results will be mainly used to inform policy-makers. However, if they are considered suitable for publication, they may be published in an international scientific journal. No information that you are required to give may be used to identify you as its source, whether the study is published or not. The information you provide is to be used only for the current study. If it is needed for other related studies, fresh approval for it will have to be granted by a competent Research Ethics Committee. This is a one-time study with no need for follow-up interviews after this one. Your cooperation in this study will be acknowledged. You may receive information about the study in published scientific papers if it is published.

Voluntariness

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate, and your decision to take part or not will not impact your relationship with [organization/researcher], now or in the future. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequence. Your privacy and confidentiality will be strictly maintained. Please feel free to ask any questions before deciding whether or not to participate.

Compensation /Reimbursement

For the time and effort you will spend while participating in this survey, you will be compensated with 10,000/=. Your contribution to this study is greatly appreciated, and we thank you for your time and cooperation.

Refreshment:

Please note that there are no specific refreshments provided as part of this process. However, in some instances, a bottle of water or any other soft drink may be available. Your comfort during participation is important to us, and we will strive to accommodate your needs to the best of our ability.

Feedback/Dissemination

We highly value your feedback, as it is critical to the success of our study. Your insights and perspectives are invaluable in helping us understand the impact of our research. Therefore, we invite you to participate in a dissemination meeting where we will share the study's findings and discuss implications for future actions. Your presence and input at this meeting are essential in ensuring that the results are accurately represented and that recommendations are meaningful and relevant.

We look forward to your participation and contribution to this important stage of the research process.

Ethical Clearance

We are pleased to inform you that the Makerere University School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (MAKSSREC) has officially cleared this study. Similarly, ethical clearance to conduct this study has been granted by the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST). This clearance ensures that the study meets rigorous ethical standards and safeguards the rights and well-being of participants. You can be assured that your participation in this study is safe, and all necessary precautions have been taken to protect your privacy and confidentiality. If you have any concerns or questions about your participation, please do not hesitate to contact the Principal Investigators using the contacts below. We are committed to ensuring a positive and ethical research experience for all participants.

Contacts and Questions

The researcher(s) conducting this study are mentioned below. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have any questions later, you may contact them at:

1. **Name**: Gabriel Iguma
   Institutions: Hub Director, Restless Development Uganda

2 Name: Dr Anthony Mugeere, Lecturer Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Institutions: Makerere University

If you would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s) about; (1) concerns regarding this study, (2) research participant rights, (3) research-related injuries, or (4) other human subjects' issues, please contact:

Assoc. Prof. Neema Stella
The Chair
Makerere University School of Social Sciences
Research Ethics Committee
And,
The Executive Secretary
The Uganda National Council of Science and Technology,

Kimera Road. Ntinda P. O. Box 6884 Kampala, Uganda

Statement of consent

I have read the above information or had the above information read to me. I have received answers to the questions I have asked. I consent to participate in this research. I am at least ……. years of age.

Name of participant:

.....

Signature or thumbprint/mark of participant: ……

Date: ……..

Name of Person obtaining Consent:

.....

.....

Signature of person obtaining consent:……

Date: ……

Witness of person in case it is required:

Name of Witness:

……

.....

Signature or thumbprint/mark of witness:……..

Date: ……

(Include above for witness if it is applicable)

Include the below information only when the research includes additional interviews.

Statement of consent to participate (in case of additional interviews)

I have read or have had the information read to me about additional interviews. I have received answers to the questions I have asked. I am at least …….. years of age.

☐ Yes, I agree to participate in additional interviews about ……..at each follow-up if selected as eligible. I understand that I can change my mind and refuse the

additional interview.

☐ I do not agree to participate in an additional interview about …… at each follow-up visit if selected as eligible.

Name of participant:
……

Signature or thumbprint/mark of participant: ……

Date: ……

Name of Person obtaining Consent:

……

Signature of person obtaining consent:……

Date: ……

Witness of person (in case it is required):

Name of Witness:
……

Signature or thumbprint/mark of witness: ……

Date: ……
(Include above for witness if it is applicable)

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of Researcher: ……

Date of the interview: ……

Hello, my name is …….. I am from Restless Development in collaboration with Makerere University and conducting a study on, *"In search of green jobs: voices of unheard young people and their aspirations, barriers and negotiations with work."* The information collected will be used to understanding the perspectives of young people, their aspirations, the key barriers that prevent young people from accessing green jobs and how young people navigate the barriers they encounter in their quest for activities that preserve and restore the environment in Uganda as well as developing strategies to support their aspirations.

Do you have any questions that you would like to ask?

May I begin the interview now?

Yes/No (circle appropriate response)

[Contact Information]

Section 1: Socio-economic demographic characteristics of the respondent			
Respondent ID:		**District:**	
Sub-County:		**Village:**	
LC1 zone:			

#	Question	Answer Options
1	How old are you? (In complete years)	Enter only 2 digits ...
2	What is the respondents' gender? (The researcher should be able to tell by looking at the respondent unless otherwise)	1 = Female 2 = Male 3 = Others (Please specify…….)
3	What is the highest level of education that you completed?	1 = No Education 2 = Lower primary (P1-P4) 3 = Upper primary (P5-P7) 4 = Ordinary level (S1-S4) 5 = Advanced Level (S5-S6) 6 = Tertiary-Level 7 = University undergraduate Level 8 = University graduate level 7 = Others (Please specify…….)

4	What is your marital status	1 = Never married 2 = Married 3 = Co-habiting 4 = Divorced/Separated 5 = Widow/Widower 6 = Others (Please specify…….)
5	What is your religion?	1=Catholic 2=Anglican 3=Muslim 4=Pentecostal/Born-again 5=Seventh day Adventist 6=Traditionalist 7= Others (Please specify…….)
6	What is your ethnicity?	1=Soga 2=Ganda 3=Nyankole 4=Nyoro 5=Luo 6=Rwandan 7= Others (Please specify…….)
7	Who is the head of your household?	1=Self 2=Father 3=Mother 4=Uncle/Aunt 5=Grandparents 6= Others (Please specify…….)
8	What is your main so urce of livelihood?	1=Crop growing 2=Animal rearing 3=Formal employment 4=Self-employment 5=Private business 6=Boda-boda riding 7=Fishing 8=Carpentry 9=Tailoring 10=Metal fabrication 11= Others (Please specify…….)
9	What is your occupation?	1=Student 2=Peasant 3=Unemployed 4=Market vendor 5=Shop keeper 6=Formal employment 7= Others (Please specify…….)
10	What takes the largest proportion of your income?	1=Food 2=School fees 3=Medical bills

		4=Supporting relatives 5=Supporting friends 6=Clothing 7=Paying rent 8= Others (Please specify…….)
11	Do you have any form of disability?	1=Yes 2=No (If noo, skip to Section 2 of the Questionnaire)
12	If yes, do you have any of the following forms of disability? (Multiple responses allowed)	1= Physical disability 2= Difficulty seeing 3= Difficulty hearing 4= Difficulty communicating (understanding or being understood) 5= Difficulty remembering or concentrating 6 = Others (Please specify…….)
13	Does any or a combination of the forms of disability in Q12 limit your involvement in activities to preserve and restore the environment?	1= Yes 2 = No (If No, move to Section 2 of the Questionnaire)
14	If yes, in which way does the disability or disabilities limit your involvement?	1= I cannot move around places the way I want 2= I cannot see things so I can't do what I would wish to do 3= I cannot hear what is being said 4= I cannot communicate what I would want to do 5= I cannot remember or concentrate on what is going on 6= Others (Please specify…….)
	Section 2: Young peoples' aspirations on work, environmental preservation and restoration and education opportunities	

15	Are you currently doing your “dream” job?	1=Yes 2=No
16	If yes, what is that “dream job” that you are involved in?	1= Government job (please specify…) 2= Non-Governmental Organisational job (please specify…)3= Private business enterprise 4= Environmental activist/campaign 5 = Practicing law 6 = Medical personnel 7 = Pilot 8 = Others (Please specify…….)
17	If yes, what are the reasons for your choice of a “dream job?”	1 = Job security 2 = Level of pay 3 = Job satisfaction 4 = Helping other people 5 = Prestige (swagger & vibe) 6 = Others (Please specify…….)
18	If no, what is the likelihood that you will achieve your "dream" job?	1=Very unlikely 2=Unlikely 3= Indifferent 4= Likely 5=Very likely
19	What is the most important constraint to realizing your "dream" job?	1=Lack of job opportunities 2=Lack of skills/proper training 3=Lack of the required education level 4=Lack of market 5=Lack of jobs in the field of my expertise/education 6=Lack of working capital 7=Nepotism/tribalism 8= Others (Please specify…….)
20	Are you motivated to work in activities that preserve the environment?	1 = Yes 2 = No
21	If no, why aren’t you motivated to work in activities that preserve the environment?	1= Not interested 2= No significant economic gain 3= Lack of capital for investment 4= No government support 5= Changing weather patterns 6= Others (Please specify…….)

22	If yes, what type of activities do you engage in to preserve the environment?	1= Increasing energy efficiency (such as the production of electric appliances, energy-efficient lighting, energy saving stoves) 2= Producing renewable energy (from wind, solar, biomass, solid waste, hydroelectric power) or manufacturing of equipment for renewable energy such as wind turbine equipment, solar heating equipment, biomass fire boilers 3= Recycling and reusing waste 4=Prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution and air emissions. 5= Organic agriculture 6= Environmental administration, compliance, training and teaching, and public awareness 7= Others (Please specify…….)
23	What are the challenges to engaging in activities to PRESERVE the environment? Kukuuma)	1=Changing weather patterns 2=High population growth 3=People's values 4=Lack of alternative fuel sources 5= Others (Please specify…….)
24	Are you motivated to work in activities that RESTORE the environment? (Kuzaawo)	1=Yes 2=No
25	If no, why are you not motivated to work in activities that restore the environment?	1= Not interested 2= No significant economic gain 3= Lack of capital for investment 4= No government support 5= Changing weather patterns 6= Others (Please specify…….)
26	If yes, what type of activities do you engage in to restore the environment?	1= Planting trees 2= Reclaiming wetlands 3= Controlling soil erosion 4= Avoiding use of toxic materials 5= Community sensitisation 6= Others (Please specify…….)
27	What are the challenges to engaging in activities to restore the environment?	1=Changing weather patterns 2=High population growth 3=People's values 4=Lack of alternative fuel sources 5= Others (Please specify…….)
28	Where do you think you will be in 5 to 10 years from now	1 = Planting trees

	regarding your involvement in activities to preserve the environment?	3=Recycling solid waste 4=Sensitization of the youths 5=Implementing Eco-friendly projects 6= Implementing advanced green technologies 7=Leading environmental community engagements 8=Doing something else (Please specify……)
29	What do you aspire to achieve regarding your education requirements in the next 5 to 10 years? Then the person falls in others…	1 = To complete secondary education 2 = To complete tertiary education 3 = To complete university education 4 = To complete graduate education 5 = Others (Please specify…….)
30	What barriers do you envisage can hold you from achieving your aspirations in education in the next 5 to 10 years?	1 = Lack of financial support 2 = Lack of family support 3 = Lack of government support 4 = Unavailability of educational opportunities such as scholarships 5 = Others (Please specify…….)
	Section 3: Observed environmental changes and navigating barriers to conservation and restoration	

31	In the past 3-5 years, have you observed any changes in the variables listed in this question? **This should be question 31** If yes, tick all that applies to you (this becomes question 32) If no, skip to Question 34	1= Yes 2= No 1=Temperature 2=Rainfall 3=Vegetation Cover 4=Water levels 5=Level of wetland conservation 6=Changes in wind and 7=Changes in humidity 8= Others (Please specify…….)
32	What do you consider the cause(s) of the changes that you have selected in Q31**(multiple responses accepted)**	1 = Deforestation 2 = Agricultural practices 3 = Pollution (national) 5 = Pollution (global) 6 = Natural causes 7 = Don't know 8 = Others (Please specify…….)
33	How important do you consider the issue of climate change?	1= Not important at all 2= Slightly important 3= Important 4= Very important
34	How much do you feel concerned about climate change?	1= Not at all 2=Not much 3=Much 4=Very much
35		
36	What are your two main sources of information about climate change issues?	1= Family/friends/colleagues 2= Social networks (Facebook, WhatsApp etc.) 3= Specialized websites, blogs & apps 4= Newspapers or magazines 5= Events, leaflets & campaign brochures 6=Radio & television 7= School (teachers) 8= Others (Please specify…….)
37	Have you participated in the following activities addressing climate change in the last 3 years? This should be qn 37 38. If yes, tick all that applies,	1= Yes 2= No

	39 If no, skip to the next question	1= Volunteer services/actions 2= School project 3= Outside school project (youth clubs/associations) 4= Personal project 5= Donations 6= Petitions 7= Debates/conferences 8= Others (Please specify…….)
38	How much do you think young people's engagement in environmental preservation is important to address the	1=Not important 2=Somewhat important 3=Important 4=Very important
39	How much do you think young people's engagement in environmental restoration is important to address the issue?	1=Not important 2=Somewhat important 3=Important 4=Very important
40	What are the barriers to young peoples' involvement in environmental preservation at; The researcher should not read the options but listen and guide the respondent in separating the individual, household and community options. a) Individual level b) Household level	1=Lack of family support 2=Lack of financial support 3=Lack of education and skills 4=Future life course events (marriage, child birth, study opportunities) 5. Others (Please specify…….) 1=Lack of family support 2=Lack of financial support 3=Lack of education and skills 4=Future life course events

		(marriage, child birth, study opportunities) 5. Cultural norms 6. Others (Please specify…….)
	c) Community level	1=Lack of family support 2=Lack of financial support 3=Lack of education and skills 4=Future life course events (marriage, child birth, study opportunities) 5. Cultural norms 6. Others (Please specify……)
41	What are the barriers to young peoples' involvement in environmental restoration at; a) Individual level	1=Lack of family support 2=Lack of financial support 3=Lack of education and skills 4=Future life course events (marriage, child birth, study opportunities) 5. Cultural norms 6. Others (Specify…)
	b) Household level	1 = Lack of family support 2 = Lack of financial support 3 = Lack of education and skills 4 = Future life course events (marriage, child birth, study opportunities) 5 = Cultural norms 6 = Others (Please specify…….)
	c) Community level	1=Lack of family support 2=Lack of financial support 3=Lack of education and skills 4=Future life course events

		(marriage, child birth, study opportunities) 5. Cultural norms 6. Others (Please specify…….)
42	What solutions do the young people propose in addressing the barriers to their involvement in activities to preserving the environment? a) Individual level b) Household level c) Community level.	1 = Seeking additional training or education 2 = Self-learning and online courses 3 = Networking and mentorship 4 = Others (Please specify…….) 1=Relocating to areas with more opportunities 2=Remote work or online opportunities 3=Local community engagement 4= Others (Please specify…….) 1=Relocating to areas with more opportunities 2=Remote work or online opportunities 3=Local community engagement 4= Others (Please specify…….)
43	What solutions do the young people propose in addressing the barriers to their involvement in activities to restoring the environment? **As above** a) Individual level	1=Seeking additional training or

		education 2=Self-learning and online courses 3=Networking and mentorship 4= Others (Please specify…….)
	b) Household level	1=Relocating to areas with more opportunities 2=Remote work or online opportunities 3=Local community engagement 4= Others (Please specify…….)
	c) Community level.	1=Relocating to areas with more opportunities 2=Remote work or online opportunities 3=Local community engagement 4= Others (Please specify…….)
44	Are you aware of the policies and regulations related to activities that preserve and restore the environment?	1=Yes 2=No (If No, skip to question 48)
45	If Yes, in which way do you think the existing policies and regulations would influence access to activities that preserve and restore the environment?	1=Strongly influence 2=Moderately influence 3=Slightly influence 4=Do not influence at all 5= I don't know
46	Whom do you think should provide solutions to the barriers faced when seeking activities that preserve and restore the environment?	1= Government 2= Community 3= CSOs/ NGOs 4= Young people 5= Others (Please specify…….)
47	What type of support would you like to receive to pursue activities that preserve and restore the environment?	1=Information on the available career options 2=Skilling related to such opportunities 3=Market opportunities for products from such activities 4=No need for any form of support 5= Others (Please specify…….)
48	To what extent do you agree with the statement "young people's involvement in activities that preserve and restore the environment is critical for their success in the future labour market?"	1= Strongly agree 2= Agree 3= Disagree 4= Strongly disagree

Thank you for your time.

Green Jobs Research; Key Informant Interview Guide

[Researcher's Name]

[Contact Information]

Respondent Information			
Name:		**Contact #:**	
Gender:		**District:**	
Occupation:		**HH:**	
Region:		**Village:**	
Education level			

1. Green Job Opportunities	
Primary Questions	**Potential Probing Questions**
How do you define green jobs? Please tell me about the green job opportunities for young people in your community.	Which green jobs are most available to young people in your community? Are the available work opportunities in your community different for young men and young? Could you describe the alignment between the green job opportunities available in your community and the career interests of young people? Please provide specifics on how they match or differ among young people? If yes, how so?
Which green job do you see most young people engaging in?	Which green jobs can young people be engaged in?
What specific obstacles or hindrances have been observed or documented that prevent young people from reaching their potential or aspirations in the green job sector?	What is the biggest barrier they face? Why is this barrier the most prominent in your experience?
What specific barriers affect participation in the green workforce: a) Young people b) Young women	How can we ensure that young people from marginalized backgrounds access green job opportunities equally? What strategies can be implemented to bridge the gap between privileged and underprivileged youth in terms of environmental employment?

What are you doing as a leader/organization to improve access to green jobs by young people in your community?	What is being done to improve young people's access to green jobs? What are the specific programmes targeting young people that are being implemented? Are young people fully aware of these opportunities? Which barriers would you say are the biggest priority that must be addressed for anything else to change? What have you done to address these barriers?
Are there success stories of young people who have successfully launched sustainable businesses? Please share if any.	What are the best practices young people seeking green jobs can adopt?
2. Environmental Changes and Impact	
Primary Questions	**Potential Probing Questions**
What comes to your mind when someone talks about 'climate change'?	In your understanding, which (environmental) changes specifically does this term refer to?
Over the past few years, what environmental changes have you seen in your community?	What changes have you seen to the weather patterns? What changes have you seen to rainfall?
How have the environmental changes you have seen affected young people's aspirations concerning green jobs?	In your experience, which green jobs have been most affected by these changes? Why? Which challenges have you seen young people, in particular, struggle with in accessing green jobs?
3. Stakeholder Interventions	
Primary Questions	**Potential Probing Questions**
How does the policy environment at the local, national, and international levels shape young people's opportunities to access green jobs?	What existing government policies could enable young people to access green jobs? What is being done to educate young people about these policies?
What specific actions or interventions is the organization/local government taking to address these barriers?	What actions or initiatives are you implementing to mitigate these barriers? What actions or initiatives are you taking to support young people navigate these barriers?

Given a chance to be part of drafting a policy on green jobs for young people, what are the key issues/themes you would include or prioritize?	What policy changes could be implemented to better support the aspirations and needs of young people as regards green jobs? Who would you be involved in implementing this policy? And why? What factors would be most important to consider in implementing the policy? Actors? Resources? Institutions?

Focus Group Discussion Guide

1. Introduction of the research team and FGD participants

Welcome everyone!

Thank you for joining this focus group discussion today. We are here to talk about an exciting topic: activities related to preserving and restoring the environment by y**oung people in Uganda**.

As you know, Uganda has a young and growing population. At the same time, the environment is facing many challenges. Thinking about activities that preserve and restore the environment offers a unique opportunity to address both of these issues. **In FGD, we want to hear your thoughts, aspirations and experiences on participating in activities to preserve and restore the environment and** we will be asking you a few questions.

Your participation is very important to us. We want to hear your opinions and experiences. There are no right or wrong answers, and all your contributions will be valued.

2. Record of all FGD participants

Respondent Information			
Name:		**Contact #:**	
Gender:		**District:**	
Occupation:		**Village:**	
Region:			

Brief introduction on what is going on regarding young people's participation in activities to preserve and restore the environment.

Uganda's young population is brimming with potential, and the good news is, the job market for activities to preserve and restore the environment is growing! These jobs combine environmental responsibility with economic opportunity, offering a win-win for both our planet and young people's futures.

This interview will explore this exciting trend. We will delve into your understanding of activities to preserve and restore the environment, what opportunities exist in this community, your aspirations, barriers encountered and the skills needed to thrive in this growing field.

a. Who are the actors/supporters/promoters of activities to preserve and restore the environment in your community? (Probe for NGOs, CSO leaders in this area, please include how are they supporting.)

b. Let us examine the activities by the young people in this community to preserve and restore the environment

c. What are the challenges and opportunities for young people's involvement in such activities?

Observed environmental changes

3. What changes have you noticed in the temperature ranges in your community in the past 3-5 years?
4. What changes have you noticed in the Rainfall patterns in your community in the past 3-5 years?
5. What changes have you noticed in the Vegetation cover pattern in your community in the past 3-5 years?
6. What changes have you noticed in the water levels pattern in your community in the past 3-5 years?
7. What changes have you noticed in the wind or storm occurrences pattern in your community in the past 3-5 years?
8. What changes have you noticed in the humidity content in your community in the past 3-5 years?

Section 1 Aspirations of young people.
(Activities which destroy, conserve and restore the environment.)

9. What are the aspirations of young people in your community or area (probe for individual, household and community aspirations)?
10. What are the youth doing to preserve the environment in your community (probe for individual, household and community initiatives)?
11. What are the youth doing to restore the environment in your community ((probe for individual, household and community initiatives)?
12. What environmental degradation activities are the youth involved in your community? (probe for individual, household and community initiatives)?
13. What knowledge, attitudes and perception do the youth have about preserving the environment in your community (probe for individual, household and community initiatives)?
14. What knowledge, attitudes and perception do the youth have about restoring the environment in your community (probe for individual, household and community initiatives)?
15. What knowledge, attitudes and perception do the youth have about the activities that destroy the environment in your community (probe for individual, household and community initiatives)?

Section 2 Barriers to participating in activities to preserve and restore the environment

16. What are the barriers to the involvement of young people in activities to preserve the environment (probe for the barriers at the individual, household and community levels)?
17. What are the barriers to the involvement of young people in activities to restore the environment (probe for the barriers at the individual, household and community levels)?

Section 3 Solutions to the barriers to youth involvement in activities to preserve and restore the environment

18. What do the young people consider as solutions to the barriers to their involvement in activities to preserve the environment (probe for the solutions at the individual, household and community levels)?
19. What do the young people consider as solutions to the barriers to their involvement in activities to restore the environment (probe for the solutions at the individual, household and community levels)?
20. What kind of skills and training do the young people in your community need to participate in activities to preserve the environment (probe for the individual, household and community skills and training needs)?
21. What kind of skills and training do the young people in your community need to participate in activities to restore the environment (probe for the individual, household and community skills and training needs)?

Thank you all.

Case studies

To deepen our understanding of the challenges and enablers of youth participation in green jobs, we documented two illustrative case studies based on key informant interviews. These cases provide contextualised examples of young people navigating green entrepreneurship in Uganda.

Case Study 1: Maria Maureen Nabuume – Braiding Sustainability with Innovation Jinja District

Maria Maureen Nabuume, a young eco-entrepreneur from Jinja, is redefining the beauty industry by creating synthetic hair from banana fibres. What began as a creative experiment has evolved into a powerful example of how youth-led innovation can support livelihoods while protecting the planet. Maria says that,

> People are starting to understand the damage that synthetic, plastic-based products are doing to the environment. Microplastics are everywhere. I wanted to be part of the solution.

Maria's journey into green entrepreneurship began with a simple idea: use agricultural waste to create something useful and safe. Motivated by the harmful effects of chemical-based hair products, she developed an organic, anti-itching alternative from banana fibres. *'It helps treat itchy scalps and is much safer for long-term use,'* Maria said.

Maria and fellow youth display eco-friendly hair from banana fibres, promoting sustainable beauty alternatives

Maria is not alone. Across her community, she has observed a growing interest in eco-friendly practices among youth. Some were producing briquettes, others were raising awareness, and a friend of hers in the construction industry was exploring sustainable

building methods without cement. The youth, she noted, were motivated by the environmental crisis they witnessed daily and the desire to create dignified work.

Yet, the road has not been easy. Maria outlined several barriers faced by young green innovators: limited awareness, negative community perceptions, lack of technical skills like proposal writing, and the ever-present challenge of start-up capital**.** She highlighted that,

> *Some youth have great ideas but no access to mentorship, skills training, or funding. Without exposure to real opportunities, they give up.*

Support systems make a big difference. Maria credited mentorship and training as critical enablers, along with organisations like Youth Go Green, National Environmental Management Authority, and public figures like Vanessa Nakate, who inspire and elevate the voice of youth in climate justice. Participating in local science fairs has also given youth like her visibility and validation. She said,

> *Green jobs have to be practical and relatable. When people see how sustainable products can fit into daily life such as hair care they start to pay attention.*

She emphasised that every day is a learning moment and that understanding green policies and participating in climate forums helps build confidence and clarity.

Maria believes that supporting green entrepreneurship requires more than goodwill. She recommended integrating green jobs into school and vocational curricula, providing soft funding for youth-led start-ups, and strengthening public-private partnerships. She also saw communication as key: *'social media and local radio can do wonders for awareness. Youth just need to be seen and heard.'*

Her story is proof that with the right combination of innovation, visibility, and support, green jobs can flourish. As she said,

> *We are not just making hair. We are restoring dignity, solving real problems, and showing what youth can build when given a real chance.*

Case Study 2: Kiwanuka Enoch – Growing Green Jobs from the Ground Up, Nakasongola District,

Enoch Kiwanuka, a young tree farmer from Nabiswera in Nakasongola, is quietly leading a green revolution. What started as a personal response to soil erosion and declining crop yields has developed into a mission to create opportunities through tree planting. As Enoch said,

> *It began as a way to utilise our land and generate income, but I have come to view it as something larger. It's not merely about trees; it's about creating opportunities.*

Enoch utilised his family's land to plant eucalyptus, Mvule, umbrella trees, and various fruit trees. He later inspired five other boys in his parish to join this initiative. Instead of waiting for handouts, the group combined their savings to purchase seedlings. They dug holes and took turns watering the trees, motivated by the knowledge that the electricity distribution body was buying eucalyptus poles.

Photo 1: Enoch planting a tree in Nakasongola, advancing youth-led green jobs through sustainable farming

Their biggest barriers have been a lack of finance, tools, and water, worsened by unpredictable weather. As Enoch explained, '*Even free seedlings aren't enough. You need tools, water, and patience, and most youth can't access loans without land titles.'* He recounted how one youth, Enock, lost his investment after seedlings dried up and couldn't afford to replant.

Support from local authorities has been insufficient. Enoch stated,

> *The district agricultural office has not supported us; they need to be more actively involved in helping youth with these ventures. We have had to rely on each other for sharing tools, manure, and encouragement.*

His persistence started to pay off. Some of the trees were now mature, and they had sold poles, used the timber for housing, and provided shade for homes. The land is greener and more resistant to erosion. As Enoch said, '*Our families are beginning to take pride in our work. Other young people are noticing and becoming interested.'*

Enoch emphasised that support for green jobs among youth should extend beyond just providing seedlings:

> We need simple training at the village level, basic equipment, accessible soft loans, and regular follow-ups. Additionally, we should demonstrate to youth how to generate income from trees, seedlings, briquettes, or wood products.

He added the story of a young woman who started a small vegetable garden on her own:

> *She now sells at the trading centre. Even with little support, youth can thrive if given a real chance.*...Just give us a real chance, and we will show you what we can grow.

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