

**RESTLESS
DEVELOPMENT**

Restless Development Uganda

Annual Report

2025

Reporting Period
October 2024 to
September 2025



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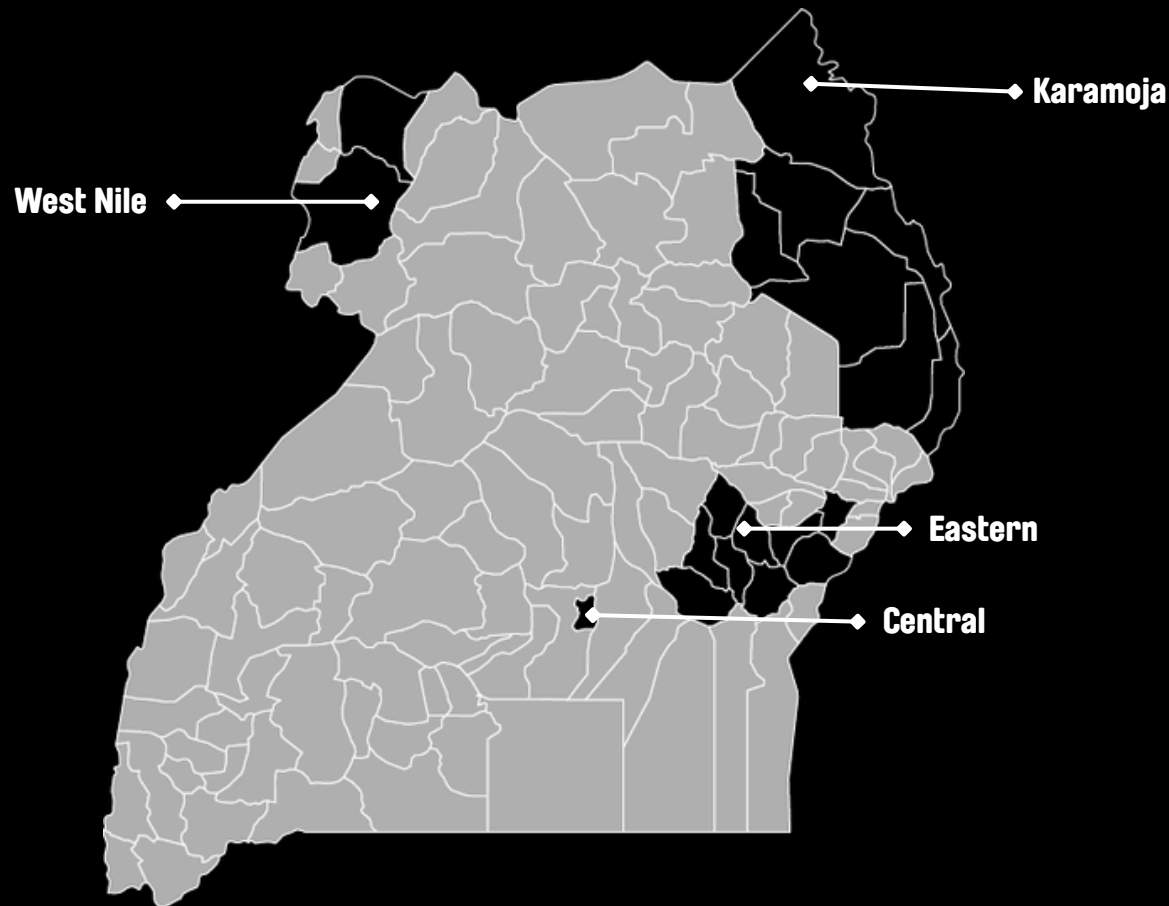
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Our presence in Uganda



Working in 25 Districts

Four offices: Kampala, Arua, Jinja and Karamoja

Central: Kampala

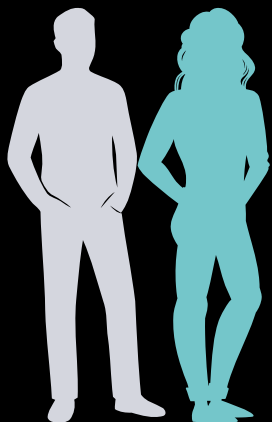
Eastern: Jinja, Buyende, Bugweri, Kamuli, Kaliro, Bugiri, Mayuge, Luuka, Iganga, Tororo and Butaleja.

Karamoja : Moroto, Kaabong, Kotido, Napak, Abim, Nakapiripirit, Nabilatuk, Amudaat and Karenga

West Nile: Arua, Madi-Okollo, Terego and Yumbe.

Results

Our year in numbers



31.5k

individuals were reached in total

24.7k

were young people under 30

19.4k

were female

12k

were male

154

were PWDs

2.9k

stakeholders engaged

1.4k

government officials

11

projects implemented



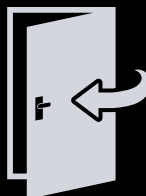
7

projects are ongoing



4

projects closing



Sofoniyas Tesfaye (Ethiopia) and Najma Omary (Tanzania), Youth Advisory Board (YAB) members under AUEU, during the AU-EU Youth Lab co-creation workshop in Uganda.



Hub Director's Message

Accountability. Impact. Young People.



The Restless Development Uganda team pose with the board of Directors of the Uganda Hub during the end-of-year staff workshop.

I am pleased to be writing this message for the third annual report in a row.

At first glance, this might not sound remarkable — organisations publish annual reports every year. But for Restless Development Uganda, it marks an important shift. For several years, we didn't consistently publish one — not due to lack of work, impact, or funding. Far from it.

At times, we question whether these reports matter beyond the organisation. No donor requires them, and in a context of limited flexible funding, one could argue that time is better spent elsewhere. But we are reminded of a deeper commitment—to accountability.

We are accountable to the many stakeholders we serve across Uganda, Africa, and beyond. Our work is built on trust, and it is only right that we share what that trust has made possible. This report is not just a milestone, but an act of accountability—to you, the reader. We invite you to hold us to account as we strive to do better.

This report highlights progress made over the past year in advancing youth-led change. Our experience continues to show that when young people are given the right support and opportunities, they are not just participants—they are drivers of development.

Through programmes such as Sexual and Reproductive Health & Economic Empowerment Supporting Out-of-school Adolescent Girls' Rights and Skills (SHE SOARS), We Lead, Youth Influence in Governance and Accountability (YIGA) project, and the Digital Health Rights Programme, we have advanced gender equality, strengthened youth leadership, and expanded access to opportunities. Over 1,700 intergenerational dialogue sessions created space for families to communicate and challenge harmful norms.

We have also reached many adolescents with critical sexual and reproductive health information and services, enabling informed decision-making.

Young people are increasingly stepping into leadership, influencing national conversations and driving advocacy.

Through the YIGA project, young people are actively participating in governance processes, ensuring their voices are heard and considered. Our investment in youth-led research continues to generate insights that inform programming and policy.

While challenges remain, this report shows that meaningful change is possible when young people are empowered.

I extend my sincere appreciation to our partners and to the young people who continue to lead and inspire this work. We remain committed to supporting youth-led initiatives and building a more inclusive future for all.

Thank you.



Hub Director
Gabriel Iguma

The Power of Opportunity and Mentorship

Rucy Ainomugisha is a youth advocate from Uganda committed to empowering young people, particularly girls and refugees. At Restless Development, she supports business development, partnerships, and the Graduate Career Accelerator Programme, creating internship opportunities for youth transitioning from education to employment. She also mentors students through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at Makerere University.



Growing up in a community where many girls were expected to marry early instead of continuing their education, I wanted something different. I believed education could open doors — not only for me, but for others as well.

In 2019, I received a scholarship to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Economics at Makerere University. This opportunity became a turning point, showing me that people can believe in your potential and invest in your future, even without knowing your full story. It inspired me to support other young people facing similar challenges.

I began my professional journey in 2022 as a Monitoring and Evaluation Intern at Reproductive Health Uganda, supporting SRHR programmes. In 2023, I joined JOMAS Foundation Africa as a Resource Mobilisation Associate, contributing to youth-led work in SRHR, climate action, and livelihoods.

That same year, I was selected as a UNHCR Young Champion, became a mentor on the Baobab Platform supporting young leaders across Africa, and received the Young African Women Award from the African Youth Leads Initiative — recognition that deepened my commitment to this work.

In early 2024, I joined Tales of Turning in South Africa as a Digital Changemaker, addressing social injustice and digital harms. I later joined the Centre for Analytics for Behavioural Change as a dialogue facilitator, helping communities navigate harmful online narratives and misinformation.

Currently, I work with Restless Development as a Resource Mobilisation Assistant Officer, where I support partnerships that create internship opportunities for young people. In this role, I led on a proposal that secured \$187,500 for a five-year project aimed at enhancing the career readiness of young professionals in Uganda.

I also serve as a Junior Mentor in the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at Makerere University, and in 2025, I was selected as the Young Values Champion at Restless Development Uganda.

My journey is guided by a simple belief: when young people are given the right opportunities, mentorship, and support, they can transform their lives and their communities.

“When young people are given the right opportunities, mentorship, and support, they can transform their lives and their communities.”



Gender and Sexual Health



A health worker administers family planning to a young person during a health outreach in Offaka, Madi-Okollo, Arua City.

SHE SOARS Project

Beyond Uganda, the Sexual and Reproductive Health & Economic Empowerment Supporting Out-of-school Adolescent Girls' Rights and Skills (SHE SOARS) project has contributed to regional learning across four countries, with Uganda's Intergenerational Dialogue (IGD) model recognised as a best practice and adopted by partners.

At the community level, over **1,700** IGD sessions across **400** households reached **1,100** people, strengthening family communication and challenging harmful gender norms. As one adolescent girl shared, "Now my parents sit and plan together. This never used to happen."

The project also delivered over **70** SRHR outreaches, reaching about **6,400** adolescents—mainly girls—with essential services, while over **200** community dialogues drove positive shifts such as shared decision-making and reduced tolerance for child marriage.

Youth voices were further amplified through **536** media engagements reaching **1,600** people.

To promote sustainability, **88** Village Health Teams and District Health Management Team members were trained, and adolescent SRHR indicators were integrated into routine health reporting systems.



I was under pressure from my family to get married because they thought it was the best way to 'secure my future.' During the outreach, I heard other girls talk about their rights and the dangers of early marriage. The peer educators encouraged us to speak up and dream big. I talked to my teacher, who helped me connect with a youth counsellor. I now have hope of finishing school and becoming a nurse someday



Joy, 16,

An adolescent girl from Banda-Kampala



Richard Adiga, a Social Action and Analysis (SAA) facilitator with the SHE SOARS project in Terego District, Aii-Vu Sub county.



SHE SOARS YAB

The Youth Advisory Board (YAB) strengthened youth leadership, regional collaboration, and accountability across Uganda, Kenya, and Zambia. So far, the old 6 YAB members have successfully completed their terms and transferred their roles to other YAB members to advance the SHE SOARS programme.

Youth Leadership and Engagement



Youth Advisory Board (YAB) members demonstrated strong leadership at the SHE SOARS All Partners' Conference in Lusaka, co-moderating sessions, leading discussions on meaningful youth engagement, and sharing lived experiences—positioning the platform as a powerful space for youth leadership and peer learning.

Through collaboration with the Canadian Youth Public Engagement Committee (YPEC), the YAB advanced youth-led advocacy by co-creating a social media campaign amplifying adolescent voices across Uganda, Kenya, and Zambia.

At the community level, the YAB strengthened youth structures through the YAB–YAS linking and learning initiative, enhancing peer learning and grassroots coordination.

The YAB also revitalised the Meaningful Youth Engagement (MYE) Marker across three countries and contributed to the development of a toolkit to support long-term accountability.

Digital Health Rights Programme (DHRP)

DHRP AT A GLANCE



The Digital Health Rights Programme strengthened youth leadership in digital health governance by combining advocacy, research, and capacity building to amplify youth voices globally. Young people engaged in major global platforms such as the Internet Governance Forum, World Health Assembly, and Africa Health Tech Summit, influencing conversations on safe and inclusive digital health systems.

Through the #MakeITSafe campaign, implemented with youth across Ghana, Kenya, Colombia, and Vietnam, the programme elevated young people's lived digital experiences and called for safer digital health spaces. The campaign reached over **40,000** people, generated over **3,100** engagements, and secured **325** pledges, while research outputs further informed global advocacy and learning.



Molly(left), STOPAIDS Advocacy Manager, Solomon(right) Ghana Community Advisory Committee member at the DHRP side event.



Young people at the DHRP side event promoting the #MakeITSafe Campaign.

We Lead

Across regions, young feminist leaders are driving accountability and influencing policy by amplifying their voices in high-level spaces, strengthening their leadership capacity, and building connected movements that advance gender equality and SRHR.

Young feminist leadership and accountability

At regional and global levels, youth voices were amplified through participation in the We Lead Summit in Nairobi, where young women from Kenya, Uganda, and Nigeria called for stronger laws, survivor-centred support systems, and action to challenge harmful norms. Youth-led advocacy was also elevated through a formal submission to the CPD58 session, calling for urgent action to protect health and wellbeing in crisis-affected Lebanon.

The project built leadership capacity among **21** youth civil society organisations in Nigeria and Kenya, resulting in significant knowledge gains— **46.5%** in Nigeria and **67.9%** in Kenya—equipping participants to mentor peers and advocate for inclusive youth and gender policies.

Leadership Labs

The young activists through the Leadership Labs from Latin America and the Caribbean engaged in intergenerational leadership learning, with a virtual lab convening around **40** participants and spotlighting young women leaders from Honduras, Guatemala, and Colombia. We Lead demonstrates how connected, youth-led feminist movements can influence policy, strengthen accountability, and advance SRHR across regions.

Impact Story

Namuyiga Mary's (Psuedo name) journey from rejection to advocacy

Mary is a true fighter who has defied all odds to emerge victorious. Despite facing social rejection due to her disability resulting from polio, Mary refused to be defined by her circumstances. When she found herself grappling with an unplanned pregnancy as a teenager abandoned by her partner, she didn't lose hope.

Joining the We Lead programme became a turning point in Mary's life. From here, she not only learned about her bodily autonomy and sexual rights but also found the support she needed to embrace single motherhood with courage and determination. She also started up a small piggery project to sustain herself and her child. Through this journey, Mary transformed into a beacon of hope, inspiring others with her unwavering spirit and resilience.

Today Mary stands as a passionate advocate for family planning, using her own experience to empower and uplift fellow peers facing similar challenges, her belief that sexual intercourse for women with disabilities should not be by chance or favour but **MUST** involve consent and pleasure, is a testament to her commitment ensuring dignity and equality for all women with disabilities.



The Community of Action in Nigeria during a meaningful youth engagement training in Nigeria.

I thought that I was a useless person. But We Lead has taught me that people with disabilities like myself are important and relevant – we are more than our disabilities.”

Mary, 23 years, Tunawezza Foundation, Tororo District

Juliet from Restless Development Uganda, during a Leadership training for the Community of Action (COA) in Kenya.



Voice and Democracy



A young debater from Yumbe Primary School shares her points during a debate session as part of the Olu Alu Campaign implementation in Yumbe.

Ending Violence Against Children (EVAC)

Young people are driving action grounded in real experiences. Through the global Youth Collective network, Youth Mobilisers documented lived experiences of violence, with all respondents reporting exposure to violence at home, school, or in their communities. These insights informed a youth-led call to action to governments and funders, highlighting both ongoing youth efforts and the urgent need for sustained funding and resources.

At the first-ever Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children, five Youth Mobilisers elevated youth leadership by launching the global EVAC youth movement, speaking and moderating sessions, and leading a youth-driven side event with civil society and the Scouts Movement.



Youth Mobilisers also engaged philanthropic actors to advocate for increased investment in EVAC, receiving positive feedback on a one-year bridging phase aimed at establishing national chapters and strengthening global coordination.

Through key advocacy moments, including the World Health Assembly and the International Day on Ending Corporal Punishment, young people called on governments to uphold commitments to protect children.

To sustain this momentum, the project strengthened youth leadership through three Youth Power Labs, equipping young leaders with skills in participatory budgeting, movement resilience, and national chapter development.



AU EU Youth Voices Lab



Young Leaders from the Youth Voices Lab during the annual youth consultative meeting in Dar-es-salaam in August 2025

The programmes were launched in October 2024 in Addis Ababa, bringing together AU and EU Commissioners and 13 Youth Advisory Board members. National inception meetings with 20 stakeholders ensured strong government and CSO buy-in.

To resource youth-led action, a third-party funding mechanism was introduced in English, French,

Through the AU–EU Youth Voices platform, young people influenced high-level spaces, presenting a joint statement directly to AU and EU Foreign Ministers.

and Arabic, attracting 470 applications—mainly from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Cameroon—and leading to the onboarding of 15 grantees.

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AUEU Youth Action Lab



The Youth Advisory Board members of the AU-EU Youth Action Lab programme in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, during a reflection meeting on the first youth funding mechanism.

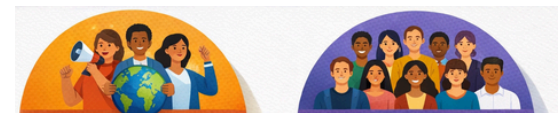
Restless Development launched a representation grant, contracting and funding 20 youth-led organisations to address issues including SRHR and HIV, child marriage, political exclusion, disability rights, climate change, and digital and sexual violence. As part of this, 12 researchers from the grantee organisations were identified and are undertaking a study to explore the impact of regranting mechanisms on the performance and sustainability of youth-led organisations.

Youth governance was strengthened through a 12-member Youth Advisory Board (YAB), with all members renewing their commitment for a second year.

they deliver meaningful and sustainable impact. Monitoring and support visits highlighted strong programme readiness while identifying capacity gaps in advocacy, operations, and financial management. Continuous learning through YAB reflections and performance reviews is informing improvements for the next funding cycle.



Funding and supporting youth-led organisations.



20 Youth-Led Organisations Funded

12 Member Youth Advisory Board

Key Issues addressed



Sexual reproductive Health



Child Marriage



Political Exclusion



Disability Rights



Climate Change



Digital and Sexual Violence

Trusting and Resourcing Youth Leads to sustainable Impact



YIGA Project



In July, Restless Development and the Youth Influence in Governance and Accountability (YIGA) project Consortium partners convened a the first ever Regional Youth Parliament in Karamoja, bringing together youth leaders from six districts to actively engage in governance and decision-making. Led entirely by young people, the platform created space for youth to raise critical issues affecting their communities, particularly the limited involvement of young people—especially young women—in policy design.

Concerns such as sexual harassment, exclusion, and lack of opportunities were highlighted, with calls for greater youth inclusion, capacity building, and empowerment.

The session resulted in concrete proposals, including expanding rural connectivity and electricity, integrating digital literacy and climate education in schools, establishing district ICT hubs, strengthening youth representation in governance, and promoting peacebuilding and livelihood initiatives tailored to Karamoja. These proposals formed an order paper that was later presented at the National Youth Parliament.

In August, five young people were supported to participate in the 8th National Youth Parliament, where they presented these recommendations under the theme of advancing multilateral cooperation through technology and partnerships.

This engagement strengthened youth influence on national policy discussions, including calls for regular national dialogues on climate action.

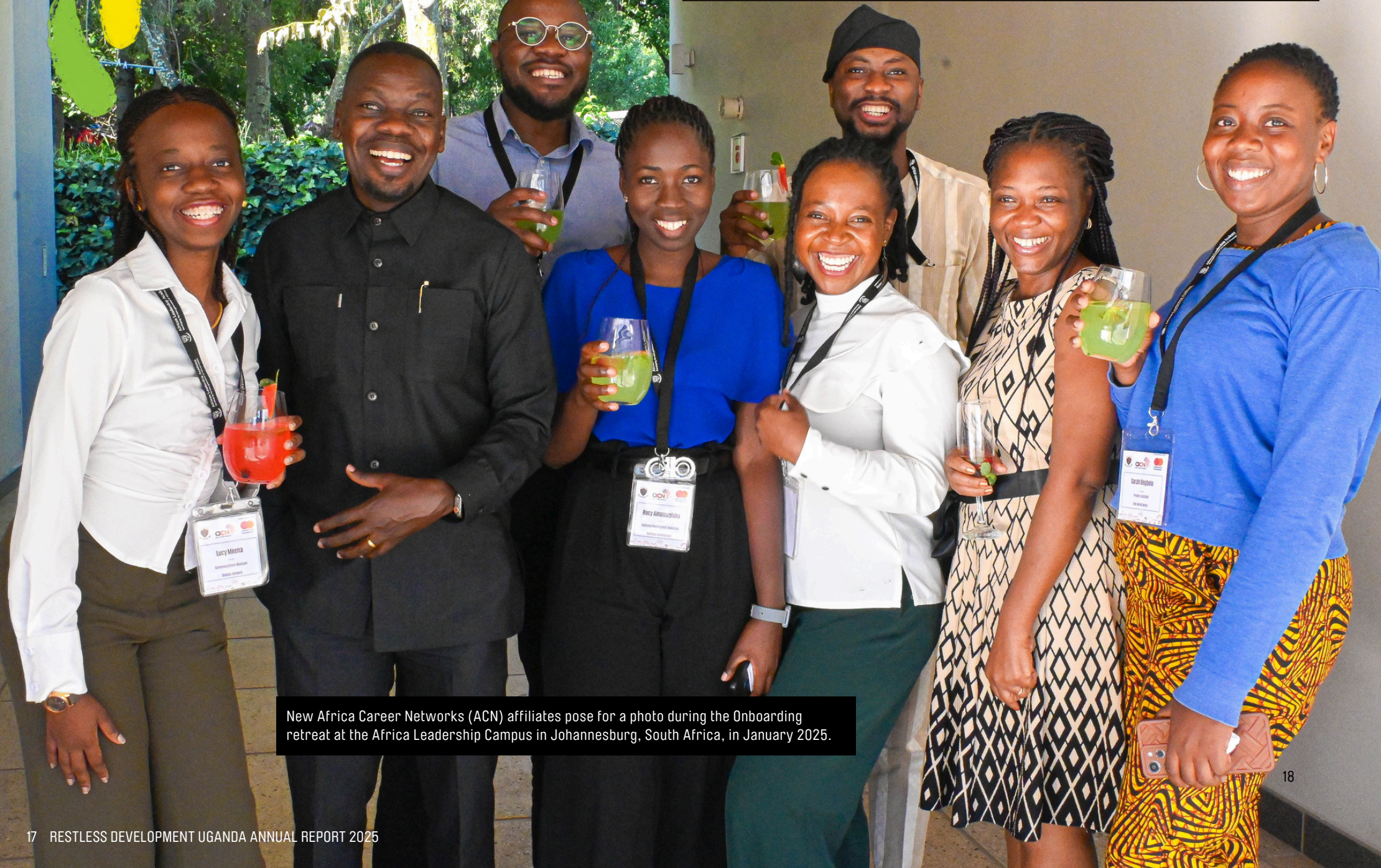
Further amplifying youth voices, Restless Development, through KAYESE, co-hosted the International Rangelands and Pastoralists Youth Gathering (IYRP) 2026 in Moroto. The event brought together over 178 pastoralist youth from across East Africa to share solutions on sustainable livelihoods, climate advocacy, peacebuilding, and resource governance.

Through the YIGA project, youth civic competence in Karamoja was strengthened, with **226** young people trained in governance, policy advocacy, and decision-making—empowering them to meaningfully participate in shaping their communities and driving climate justice.

“ Limited involvement in decision-making and policy design continues to affect women because their needs are often not considered. Many girls also face challenges such as sexual harassment in workplaces and within their communities. Government must prioritise involving young in decision-making and invest in empowering girls through capacity building and skills development. ”

Lokwakol, a youth leader from Karamoja region. during the Karamoja regional youth parliament.

Education and Livelihoods



New Africa Career Networks (ACN) affiliates pose for a photo during the Onboarding retreat at the Africa Leadership Campus in Johannesburg, South Africa, in January 2025.

GCAP

The Graduate Career Accelerator Programme (GCAP) is creating practical pathways to employment for young people by combining strong employer partnerships, evidence-driven career support, and youth-led innovation—resulting in internships, job opportunities, and inclusive participation for Mastercard Foundation Scholars and Alumni.

The GCAP project, implemented by Restless Development, supports Mastercard Foundation Scholars and Alumni to transition from education to employment through employer engagement, career readiness, and youth-led innovation.

A dedicated implementation team engaged 54 employers, building strong partnerships to support youth professional development. Interest in the programme was high, with 129 young people interviewed and 124 assessed, revealing key barriers such as youth unemployment and limited access to finance (both cited by 99%).

Overall, GCAP shows how employer partnerships, data-driven support and youth-led innovation can unlock meaningful work opportunities for young people.



These insights shaped a sector-based Innovation Challenge, where 95 youth applied, and 40 participants were selected to implement solutions in agribusiness and health, receiving enterprise support training.

The project has already delivered tangible results, including 17 internships and 1 job placement, while prioritising inclusion with 69% female participation and representation of young people with disabilities and internally displaced youth.



RESEARCH



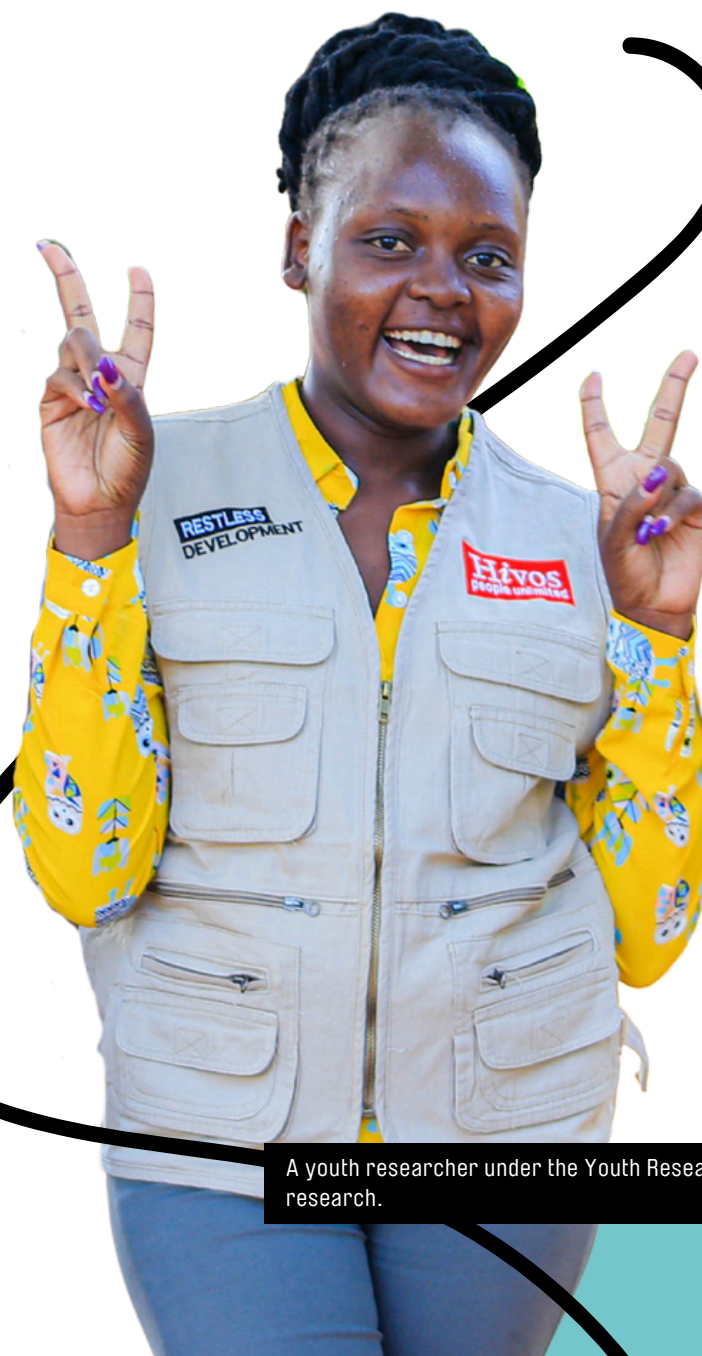
Girl Researchers under the Global Girls Creating Change (G2C2) project in Karamoja region.

Evidence Led by Young People, Shaping Policy and Practice

When young people lead research, evidence drives real change, shaping policies, strengthening programmes, and amplifying youth influence.

Restless Development strengthened its leadership in youth-led, evidence-based research, generating practical insights to inform policy, programming, and advocacy across employment, climate action, child protection, and youth participation.

Through the Green Jobs and Young People research, youth researchers collected and analysed data in Jinja and Nakasongola with findings validated through stakeholder engagement and shared community dialogues, national events, and regional platforms such as the Cape Town conference.



A youth researcher under the Youth Researchers Academy research.

This work was further expanded through the Youth Researchers Academy and the AU-EU Youth-Led Research Programme, which supported youth researchers across multiple countries to deliver ethical, high-quality research.



New opportunities, including partnerships with the British Council and Oak Foundation, deepened focus on meaningful youth engagement and child protection.

Overall, the research demonstrates that when young people lead, evidence becomes more grounded, inclusive, and impactful in shaping policy and practice.



Thank you to our Donors and Partners



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