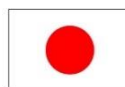


REPORT ON THE HIGH-LEVEL PARLIAMENTARIANS MEETING ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Kampala, Uganda
21 - 23 February 2025





From
the People of Japan



Table of Contents

List of Acronyms..... 5

1.0 Introduction 6

1.1 Background 7

1.2 The African Parliamentarians Forum on Population and Development 7

1.3 About Uganda Parliamentarians Forum on Food Security, Population and Development 8

1.4 Justification for the High-Level Parliamentarians meeting and visit..... 9

2.0 High-Level Parliamentarians Meeting on Population and Development..... 10

2.1 Opening Session..... 10

2.1 Welcome remarks by Chairperson Uganda Parliamentarians Forum on Food Security, Population and Development (UPFFSPD) 11

2.2 Message from UNFPA Representative, Ms. Gift Malunga 11

2.3 Message from Dr. Abdul Rashid Hassan Pelpuo, President, APFPD/FPA 13

2.4 Official opening by the Rt. Hon. Rukia Nakadama, 3rd Deputy Prime Minister of Uganda ... 15

3.0 Presentations 16

3.1 Prospects and Challenges in addressing population issues in Uganda and the role of Parliament in harnessing the Demographic Dividend 16

3.2 Presentation of Sexual Reproductive Health, Rights, and Gender-Based Violence Issues. Policy Implications. 15

3.3 Plenary, Discussion and Recommendations (Issues raised) 17

4.0 Courtesy Visit to the Afro Arab Youth Council Offices. 20

4.1 Familiarisation Tour of the Offices of the Afro Arab Youth Council 20

4.2 About the Afro Arab Youth Council (AAYC)..... 20

4.3 Message from the Secretary General of the Afro Arab Youth Council (AAYC) 21

4.4	Message from the President of the African Parliamentarians Forum on Population and Development	23
5.0	Field Visit to Reproductive Health Uganda	24
5.1	About Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU)	24
5.2	About Reach A Hand Uganda (RAHU)	25
5.3	Welcome Remarks from Reproductive Health Uganda.....	25
5.4	Presentation by Reach A Hand Uganda (RAHU)	26
5.4	Peer Educator's Experience	27
5.5	Plenary, Recommendations and Way Forward	28
5.6	Closing Message from the President APFPD	29
6.0	Visit to Eco-Tourism Site	31
6.1	About Mabira Forest Reserve	31
6.2	Recommendations and Way Forward.	32
7.0	Courtesy Visit with Hon. David Bahati, Uganda Minister of Trade	33
	Annex 1: Programme	34
	Annex 2: Links and Publications	35

List of Acronyms

APFPD/FPA	African Parliamentarians Forum on Population and Development
APDA	Asian Population and Development Association
AU	African Union
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender Based Violence
ICPD	International Conference on Population Development
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
JTF	Japan Trust Fund
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MPs	Members of Parliament
NPA	National Planning Authority
RAHU	Reach A Hand Uganda
RHU	Reproductive Health Uganda
SDGs.	Sustainable Development Goals
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health Rights
SSPNPD	South Sudan Parliamentary Network on Population and Development
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UPFFSPD	Uganda Parliamentarians Forum on Population and Development



The Opening ceremony for the high-level meeting organised by the African Parliamentarians Forum on Population and Development

1.0 Introduction

The Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Food Security, Population and Development (UPFFSPD) hosted the African Parliamentarians Forum on Population and Development (APFPD) for a series of activities that included a High-level meeting on Population and Development and field visits to selected partners. The activities took place from February 21 - 23, 2025. The high-level meeting that was held at the Parliament of Uganda in Kampala was presided over by the 3rd Deputy Prime Minister of Uganda, Rt. Hon. Rukia Isanga Nakadema and included participation of Members of Parliament from the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Food Security, Population and Development and key partners in population and development from the; Office of the Prime Minister; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); National Planning Authority (NPA); Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU); Reach A Hand Uganda (RAHU). The Minister of Employment, Youth and Jobs in the Government of Ghana, Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Pelpuo, who is also the President of the APFPD represented the Executive of the APFPD in this meeting.

The three-day activity included a high-level Parliamentary meeting, a site visit to the African and Arab Youth Council (AAYC), a visit to Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU), and visits to ecotourism sites in Jinja. This is a Report on the proceedings and deliberations from this high-level parliamentary meeting and site visits by the Africa Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development.

This programme was supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Japan Trust Fund (JTF), in cooperation with the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

1.1 Background

Africa's primary context of population and development issues is the continent's rapidly growing population, which puts immense strain on existing infrastructure, healthcare systems, and economies, leading to challenges like widespread poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and inadequate access to basic services, all while presenting an opportunity of a potential demographic dividend if managed effectively through targeted policies focused on education, healthcare, and family planning. Key points to note about population and development in Africa include:

- High fertility rates, whereby Africa has the highest fertility rates globally, contributing to rapid population growth and a resultant young population.
- A large proportion of the African population is young, creating a dependency burden on the working population.
- Resultant Urbanization challenges. Rapid urbanization has led to sprouting of unplanned, overcrowded slums and inadequate urban infrastructure, further exacerbating existing problems.
- Impact on development: This population growth puts pressure on access to education, healthcare, jobs, and basic necessities like water and sanitation.

There are however potential benefits of a growing population which can be harnessed if strategic investments are made. Some of the potential benefits include:

- Demographic dividend: If properly managed, a young population can provide a large workforce with potential for economic growth.
- Economic dynamism: A large young population can fuel innovation and entrepreneurship.

1.2 The African Parliamentarians Forum on Population and Development (APFPD)

The APFPD was established in 2012 as a regional Parliamentary Forum to strengthen the capacities of African Parliamentarians for the implementation of the program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and to help in meeting the commitments of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063. The APFPD aims to bring together African parliamentarians to; discuss, advocate for, and enact policies that promote sustainable development on the continent by addressing population-related issues like sexual and reproductive health, family planning, and gender equality through legislative action and awareness campaigns. Key points about the forum:

1. Focus on policy development:

The forum actively works to identify and promote the creation of population and development policies at the national and regional level, aligning with international agreements like the ICPD Program of Action.

2. Legislative advocacy:

By convening parliamentarians, the forum provides a platform to discuss and push for legislation that supports population-related goals, including access to reproductive healthcare and women's empowerment.

3. Raising awareness:

The forum aims to educate African parliamentarians and the public on the critical links between population dynamics and sustainable development.

4. Collaboration with stakeholders:

It facilitates partnerships with relevant organizations like UN agencies, NGOs, and research institutions to enhance the effectiveness of its work.

With support from different partners including the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Forum has been actively involved in a series of activities not only to build capacity of members but also to ensure that the aspirations of the ICPD agenda are domesticated by different countries in Africa. The Forum has created a clear network for sharing experiences and success stories as a learning opportunity for its members.

1.3 About the Uganda Parliamentarians Forum on Food Security, Population and Development (UPFFSPD)

The UPFFSPD is a voluntary and non-political undertaking for Members of Parliament (MPs) from Uganda with a mandate to promote the advocacy and legislation on issues of Food Security, Nutrition, income generation as well as improved livelihood. The Forum provides a platform for MPs to discuss, share experiences and support activities that would enhance participation of communities in achieving sustainable development, food security and a healthy productive population. The Vision of the Forum is to have a 'food secure and healthy population in Uganda'. Its Mission is to have a vibrant parliamentary forum that will emphasize food security, population and development issues on the advocacy and legislative agenda.

The overall objectives of the Forum include;

- Generating general awareness on food security and population issues in the country.

- Lobbying for the inclusion of food security and reproductive health issues in the government priority programmes.
- Identifying critical areas of political and economic concerns and developing approaches, structures and strategies to address them.
- Promoting investments in population development and food security.

1.4 Justification for the High-Level Parliamentarians meeting and visit

In 2022, the APFPD reaffirmed its purpose as a regional body to drive the agenda on Population and Development at both the national and regional levels. Allies and strategic partners of the Forum reaffirmed their commitment to work with this continental body and lay a foundation for both the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Program of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the 2030 Agenda.

The High-Level Parliamentarians meeting and visit to Kampala, Uganda was to provide mechanisms of providing a platform to exchange ideas amongst African Parliamentarians. The Kampala Meeting would reflect on the key challenges, share knowledge and experiences of different Countries and chart a way forward.

The key objectives of the meeting and visit were therefore to; Re-energize Parliamentary action on the implementation of the ICPD-PoA; Share experiences on Population interventions in different African Countries and; Reflect on South-to-South population and development activities and generate recommendations for population discourse in the region.



Excom Member, Hon. Milton Muwuma; Chief Guest, Rt. Hon Rukia Nakadama and the UNFPA Representative, Ms. Gift Malunga

2.0 High-Level Parliamentarians Meeting on Population and Development

2.1 Opening session

The Opening session was moderated by the Coordinator of the APFPD, Mr. Wamala Musa Buyungo.

Mr. Buyungo, who is also the coordinator of the UPFFSPD welcomed the Chief Guest, the President of the APFPD, Members of Parliament from the Government of Uganda, Development Partners and Stakeholders to the high-level meeting. He shared the meeting objectives and emphasized that the purpose of the meeting was to re-energize Parliamentary action on the implementation of the ICPD-PoA, share experiences on Population interventions in different African Countries and to reflect on South-to-South population and development activities and generate recommendations for population discourse.



2.1 Welcome remarks by Chairperson Uganda Parliamentarians Forum on Food Security, Population and Development (UPFFSPD)

The Chairperson of the UPFFSPD warmly welcomed all members to the high-level dialogue. The Chairperson who was represented by Hon. Milton Muwuma, an Executive Member of the Forum thanked the Guest of Honour for gracing the meeting. He gave apologies on behalf of the Chairperson of the Forum, who was away on official duty. Hon. Muwuma thanked the President of the APFPD for visiting the Parliament of Uganda and for representing the Forum in Uganda. He thanked all the Population and Development stakeholders for their great work and for continuously supporting population and development interventions in the Country and the Region. He noted the contribution of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to the country's population development agenda.

Hon. Muwuma reflected on the work done by the UPFFSPD and also noted the population development issues like high teenage pregnancies, high rate of school dropout, maternal mortality which the Forum was engaging on as a way of improving the quality of life of the people of Uganda. He noted the need for more community outreaches in order to support the Parliamentary advocacy that was already under way. He ended by thanking the APFPD especially the President Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Pelpuo for keeping the Forum vibrant.

2.2 Message from UNFPA Representative, Ms. Gift Malunga

The UNFPA Representative recognized the presence of the 3rd Deputy Prime Minister, Hon Rukia Nakadama and the presence of the President of the APFPD, Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Hassan Pelpuo. She commended Ugandan Members of Parliament for their commitment to legislative oversight and budgetary action in advancing the reproductive rights and choices of women and girls. Ms. Malunga further appreciated the Government of Uganda and Parliament for successfully conducting Uganda's first-ever digital census which had seen the preliminary results being released within an impressive four months. She further noted that the data from the Census was critical in tracking progress and informing the response to population and development challenges.



UNFPA Representative, Ms. Gift Malunga

The Representative shared some statistics showing Uganda's progress in population and development. She elucidated that maternal mortality had reduced by 44% in five years (from 336 deaths per 100,00 live births in 2016 to 189 deaths per 100,00 live births in 2023). The contraceptive use amongst married women had increased from 35% to 38% while gender-based violence had declined, with physical violence against women dropping from 56% in 2011 to 44% in 2022. Ms Malunga noted that in spite of the above-mentioned progress, there were a number of population development

challenges that remained, which were further compounded by the changing funding landscape thereby presenting significant challenges and back tracking to progress made.

Ms. Malunga further mentioned some key persisting challenges that remained as; the high teenage pregnancy rate that had remained stagnant at 24% over the last two decades; early marriages; increase in unemployment amongst youth which had increased from 4.2 million (41%) to 5.3 million (51%) according to a study conducted by the United Nations Population Fund and the Government of Uganda on Youth Not in Education, Not in Training.

In her concluding remarks, Ms. Malunga urged Members of Parliament to; Increase domestic funding towards sexual and reproductive health; Prioritise education of girls; Support eradication of harmful social and cultural practices; Promote Youth Employment and; Invest in Skills development. She noted that Parliamentarians are key to shaping Policies and can exercise their power to ensure that young people's health, education and economic empowerment are prioritized in order to contribute to population development and ensure no one is left behind.

2.3 Message from Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Hassan Pelpuo, President, APFPD



Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Pelpuo, President APFPD

Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Pelpuo recognized the presence of the 3rd Deputy Prime Minister, Rt. Hon Rukia Nakadama, Hon Members of Parliament from Uganda, the UNFPA Country Representative, Representatives of Government agencies present in the meeting and representatives of Civil Society Organisations. He appreciated the Government of Uganda and the UPFFSPD for hosting the high-level Parliamentary meeting and the hospitality that had been accorded him.

Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Pelpuo that his home country, Ghana, had

similar development paradigms like Uganda, and it was a good opportunity to learn from one another through the auspices of the APFPD, IPPF and JTF. Dr. Pelpuo further appreciated the Government of Uganda for the special emancipation of women that the country is lauded for, which he said should be emulated by other African countries. He requested the Rt. Hon Deputy Prime Minister to convey the appreciation of the APFPD to H.E the President of Uganda.

Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Hassan Pelpuo noted that in June 2022, the General Assembly of the APFPD had agreed to popularize a campaign on Population and Development. In the same General Assembly, Hon. Milton Muwuma had been elected to the Excom and Mr. Musa Wamala Buyungu nominated as the coordinator of the forum and tasked to undertake the popularization campaign. This visit was part of the popularization campaign that the forum was undertaking. He further noted that in February 2024, the APFPD had undertaken a visit to Uganda to learn from the population and development experiences of the Country. He appreciated the lessons that the Forum had learnt from the visit and interaction with agencies implementing population and development interventions. The visit had illustrated that Uganda was leading in strides in the population and development landscape.

Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Hassan Pelpuo compared some population development indicators from his country Ghana and for Uganda. He exemplified that in the 1960s, Uganda and Ghana had similar population size, 8 million for Uganda and 7.8 million for Ghana. Sixty-five (65) years later, Uganda's population was 45 million and Ghana was 34 million. He challenged members present to reflect on the factors behind this rapid growth especially in Uganda and examine whether the growth was matching the development. If not, there was a need for Policymakers to devise policies that matched the pertaining development concerns.

In conclusion, Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Hassan Pelpuo noted that it was time for Africa to rise up to its development challenges and not depend on aid all the time. African leaders should give confidence to their people by budgeting and utilizing the existing resources appropriately. This will change the begging pattern that has plagued the region for long.

2.4 Official opening by the Rt. Hon. Rukia Nakadama, 3rd Deputy Prime Minister of Uganda

The 3rd Deputy Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Rukia Nakadama warmly welcomed the President of the APFPD to Uganda. She congratulated Mr. Musa Wamala Buyungo on his appointment as the Coordinator of the APFPD, which, she said, was a testament of the work well done as the coordinator of the UPFFSPD. She appreciated Members of Parliament present, development partners and population development stakeholders for their role in transforming the population.

The 3rd Deputy Prime Minister noted that indeed the Uganda National Household Census had been concluded in record time and Uganda had new data to support planning for its population. This was an important resource that policymakers should utilize to support their respective appropriation roles. Rt. Hon. Nakadama informed members that Government through the Vision 2040 goal was planning for the increased population and aimed to increase the per capita income to 9,000 USD by 2040. This was dependent on correct data and key investments.

The 3rd Deputy Prime Minister further informed members that indeed as the President of the APFPD had noted, there needed to be a match between population growth and development and that if the former was left unchecked, it would outstrip the benefits of population development and increase the country's vulnerability to population challenges. She called upon development partners to continue supporting population development programmes and support Government in integrating population development priorities in all development programmes. She saluted members of the UPFFSPD for enactment of population centered laws, undertaking of community outreaches and budget scrutiny. She called upon them to continue undertaking those key roles because Uganda still had poor population-development indicators that needed to be tackled.

In conclusion, Rt. Hon. Rukia Nakadama appreciated the President of the APFPD, thanked him for choosing Uganda to host the high-level Parliamentary meeting and, officially declared the meeting open.



3rd Deputy Prime Minister. Rt. Hon. Rukia Nakadama

3.0 Presentations

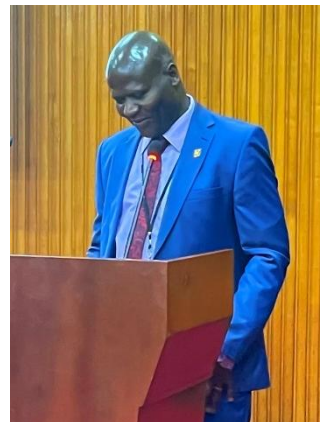
3.1 Prospects and Challenges in addressing population issues in Uganda and the role of Parliament in harnessing the Demographic Dividend

The presentation on ‘Prospects and Challenges in addressing population issues in Uganda and the role of Parliament in harnessing the Demographic Dividend’ was made by Ms. Edith Kangabe, a Senior Planner with the National Planning Authority. Ms. Kangabe shared that Uganda’s long-term development effort, which was initiated in 2010, is driven by Uganda’s Vision 2040 which is implemented through 10-Year Development Plans and six medium-term National Development Plans. The Vision 2040 recognises population as the most important resource in the country’s development process.

Ms. Kangabe said that Uganda’s population has been growing at a high rate of more than 3 percent over the last 30 years mainly due to high fertility, resulting in Uganda’s population being one of the youngest populations in the world. Uganda Vision 2040 recognises that today’s young people will be the drivers to achieve the Vision. It is therefore imperative that the right interventions are made to ensure that the aspirations set out in the Vision 2040 are met, and harnessing of the demographic dividend as one of the strategies for the eventual attainment of those targets. The National Planning Authority works with Government Agencies, Civil Society Organisations, the private sector and Development Partners to identify critical interventions that make a difference in the lives of the country’s population especially the young persons to prepare for the socio-economic transformation process.

3.2 Presentation of Sexual Reproductive Health, Rights and Gender-Based Violence Issues. Policy Implications.

The presentation on ‘Sexual Reproductive Health, Rights and Gender Based Violence’ was made by the Executive Director of Reproductive Health Uganda, Mr. Jackson Chekwewko (in picture). The presentation highlighted the reproductive health prospects, opportunities and challenges faced by young people in Uganda, aged 30 years and below, more so because young people comprise of over 75% of the Ugandan population. Mr. Chekwewko shared that Uganda is making good progress in tackling maternal mortality. He further shared that inspite of the progress on maternal mortality, teenage pregnancy persists in the country.



During his presentation, Mr. Chekweko shared that with a population of 45 million, Uganda has one of the world's highest fertility rates at 5.2, a teenage pregnancy rate of 24%, and one of the youngest and most rapidly growing populations. He highlighted that many reproductive health challenges the country faces are concentrated among young people.

He reiterated the need for a multi-sectoral response to SRH issues that continue to impede Uganda's population from achieving its full potential. He urged parliamentarians to conduct post-legislative reviews to reveal achievements, gaps in implementation, and other positive and negative impacts that hinder the realization of policy objectives on SRH and GBV.

Mr. Chekweko further noted that funding for reproductive health had reduced by almost 70% and there was therefore need for development partners to devise new strategies to respond to the changing reproductive health landscape. He asked Members of Parliament to pick interest in reproductive health rights and issues like; the enactment of the sexual offenses bill; high taxation on menstrual products which is negatively affecting and; access to reproductive health commodities.

3.3 Plenary, Discussion and Recommendations (Issues raised)

3.3.1 Emerging Issues

Members appreciated the presentations that had provided a snapshot on the prevailing population development landscape in the country. They noted that most of the issues were related to the needs of young people. The following emerging issues were raised during plenary;

- 1. Provision of age-appropriate information:** A Member noted that indeed it was true that 14 - 17-year-old girls were already sexually active. However, the Government Policy was not in support of provision of family planning commodities to girls under 18 years. How can a leader mitigate the health-related issues that can arise from use of family planning amongst young people? Members further inquired on how they can be supported to provide culturally sensitive age-appropriate information on Family Planning. Members were informed that development partners had built capacity on provision of age- appropriate culturally sensitive information in schools. Government should enhance the provision of age-appropriate information instead of avoiding the subject. It was noted that religious leaders had also joined the effort to develop religious materials that were according to the scriptures.

2. Members noted the **skewed coverage of reproductive health services**. It was noted that service delivery was concentrated in some regions whilst other regions like Madi sub region and some hard-to-reach areas had been left behind. Government should be provided with real time mapping of the areas that were lacking such vital services. This will ensure that young people everywhere are equally benefiting from government services especially in terms of health and education. Special effort should be made to provide services in the hard-to-reach areas.
3. The Ministry of Education and Sports should **encourage both formal and informal sensitization on Reproductive health and rights** for young people. This will ensure that both in and out of school young people access services.
4. **Neglect of the Boy Child**: It was observed that the boy child had not been prioritized in Government programmes on reproductive health. Many development partners had also concentrated on programmes catering to the girl child. Due attention should be paid.
4. **Need to expedite finalization of Parenting Strategy**: The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development had developed a parenting strategy that would respond to the growing concerns on issues of adolescent sexual reproductive health. The process should be expedited.

3.3.2 Recommendations and wrap up

The Members of Parliament built consensus on the following matters;

1. Humanity should be at the forefront of all development programmes. All programmes should be guided by the National Development Plan (NDP) IV and the Sustainable development Goals. This will **facilitate equity and equality in the provision of services and in all government programmes**.
2. There is urgent need for Members of Parliament to **review some of the existing legal and regulatory frameworks** to provide an enabling environment for population and development issues.
3. There should be **responsive budgetary appropriation** towards population development needs. This was in respect to the matter that had been raised on the issue of taxation on sanitary products, which members had agreed was both prohibitive and gender blind.
4. **Monitoring and evaluation should be improved** in order to ensure efficient utilization of resources.
5. **Community outreaches should be supported** in order to provide support for population development matters.

3.3.3 Formal Closure of the High-level Meeting by the Vice Chairperson of UPFFSPD

The Vice Chairperson of the UPFFSPD, Hon. Juliet Agasha Bashisha expressed her appreciation towards participants in the high-level meeting. She appreciated the Members of Parliament for their keen interest in the population development discourse and for the proposals they had put forward. She also appreciated the development partners present in the meeting and the stakeholders who had shared key statistics with the Parliamentarians.

Hon. Agasha in a special way appreciated the support of the APDA, for facilitating the APFPD to ensure that the Forum remains actively involved in population development activities not only to build capacity of members but also to ensure that the aspirations of the ICPD agenda are domesticated by different countries in Africa.

She further thanked the President of the APFPD for choosing Uganda as the host for the high-level meeting. She noted the recommendations that had been raised and proposed that the Forum take a keen interest in the recommendations.

The Vice Chairperson formally closed the meeting thereafter.



Vice Chairperson of the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Food security, Population and Development

4.0 Courtesy Visit to the Afro Arab Youth Council (AAYC) Offices.

4.1 Familiarisation Tour of the Offices of the Afro Arab Youth Council



Secretary-General AAYC and the President APFPD

A delegation headed by the President of the APFPD visited the offices of the Afro- Arab Youth Council (AAYC) after the high-level Parliamentary meeting. The delegation was warmly received by Hon. Dr. Abbas Agaba, the Secretary General of the AAYC. The delegation was taken on a familiarization tour of the offices of the AAYC and briefed about the origin and work of the Council in Uganda.

4.2 About the Afro Arab Youth Council (AAYC)

The AAYC is an international organization of the Youth of the African and Arab Countries. It is a conglomeration of National Youth Organisations from over 68 member states whose interest is to unite the youth of the two regions and mobilise them to participate in various development agendas both within and outside their Countries, and contribute positively to the protection, preservation and promotion of the common good in terms of culture, values, traditions, heritage, and social-economic interests. The AAYC is an Inter-Continental Platform of Youth Organizations of Africa and the Arab World that enjoys independent legal status and its membership and mandate has grown over time to approximately 70-member

state organizations, 30 non-governmental youth Organizations, and has recognition with the African Union and Arab League as a specialized organization for the youth in these two regions. The Afro-Arab Youth Council is housed under the Office of the President of Uganda since 2019. H.E is the patron of the organisation and offers strategic leadership to the organisation.

The AAYC is dedicated to empowering and uniting youth across Africa and the Arab world. The following core objectives of the organisation reflect a vision of collaboration, sustainable development, and meaningful youth participation. They include;

- **Strengthening Cooperation and Unity:** Fostering a spirit of cooperation and integration among youth organisations and unions across Africa and the Arab world, uniting young people in common purpose.
 - **Raising Awareness and Promoting Youth Rights:** Highlighting the challenges facing young people, including unemployment, illiteracy, and poverty, and advocate for their rights and opportunities. We address key political, economic, and social issues affecting youth across the Afro-Arab regions.
 - **Supporting Youth in Voluntary and Cultural Endeavours thereby** encouraging youth involvement in voluntary and humanitarian efforts, as well as fine arts, sciences, sports, and other cultural areas. We nurture initiatives that bring youth into leadership roles within their communities.
 - **Fostering Global and Regional Partnerships and** building strategic alliances with international, regional, and national youth organisations to broaden AAYC's impact and foster mutual growth.
 - **Promoting Girl Child Rights and Inclusion to** support young women's equal participation in decision-making across political, social, and economic arenas, ensuring they have an active role in shaping the Council's initiatives and the future of their communities.
 - **Support the Aspirations of the African Union and Arab League.** Align with and actively promote the principles and values of the African Union and the Arab League.
 - **Encouraging Youth Participation in Development** and tackling challenges such as school dropout rates, youth unemployment, healthcare access, and environmental concerns, empowering youth to be central participants in regional development.
- For more information visit <https://aayouthcouncil.com/about-us>

4.3 Message from the Secretary General of the Afro Arab Youth Council (AAYC)

The Secretary General of the Afro Arab Youth Council welcomed the delegation headed by the President of the APFPD.



Group photo after familiarisation tour of AAYC offices

The Secretary-General shared that the formation and journey of the AAYC in 2004 emerged out of a need to respond to the peculiar needs of the youth on the two continents. He noted that two thirds of the world's population are found in the Arab and Africa Continents. It was therefore important to provide a platform to listen and promote the voices of young people from Arab and African Countries. He reiterated the objectives of the Council as shared above. Current initiatives and roles of the Council include; Advisory to Government on migration and labour export issues and development of position papers on issues affecting the two continents; Chapters with seven universities; in addition to advocacy and sensitization on youth-related matters.

The Secretary-General further shared that during their second summit in 2008, attended by over 5,000 youths from subscribing nations, President Museveni, in fulfillment of a Presidential pledge made to the council members handed over 50 acres of land in Kawuku, Katabi sub-county of Wakiso district in Entebbe. The Council intends to build a complex comprising of; offices; a 20,000-seater stadium; a university of science and technology; a hotel and recreation facility and; a cultural heritage center.

A major highlight of the discussions was the council's ambitious plan to construct its international headquarters on 50 acres of land in Nakawuka, Uganda. The facility, which will feature an office block, a stadium, a university of science and technology, a cultural heritage center, and a hotel, is projected to cost between \$150 million and \$200 million. Former Ugandan Prime Minister, Right Hon. Dr. Rwakana Mbunda, has been tasked with leading fundraising efforts for the initiative.

Dr. Agaba underscored the significance of this project in strengthening Afro-Arab youth relations, stating, “We think these projects will give young people a platform to interact, study, and collaborate, ensuring a brighter future for both Africans and Arabs.”

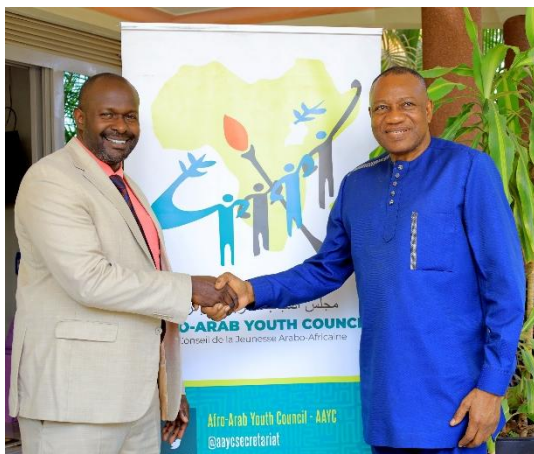
As the AAYC continues to expand its impact, leaders remain committed to fostering investment partnerships and policy frameworks that position young people at the center of Africa and the Arab world's economic growth. In his concluding remarks, the Secretary-General appreciated the President of the APFPD for visiting Uganda and for the Courtesy visit to the Council. He further appreciated the growth of Ghana's democracy and requested the visiting President of the Forum to extend the greetings of the Council to the President of Ghana. As he concluded he raised the following recommendations for the attention of the forum and any interested partners;

1. A request for a working relationship with the APFPD.
2. Need for support for the creation of offshore and digital jobs in order to harness opportunities for Afro Arab Youth.
3. Need for the creation of an Afro Arab innovation fund.

4.4 Message from the President of the African Parliamentarians Forum on Population and Development

The President of the APFPD appreciated the Secretary General of the AAYC for the wonderful arrangements and the elaborate update about the Council. He appreciated the Secretary General's concerns on youth unemployment and emphasized the need for population to grow in tandem with development.

The President said Africa should be cautious about its high population growth rate that was outstripping its development potential elaborating that development is not necessarily about numbers, it is about quality whereby the population is employed, healthy, skilled and productive. Africa should aspire to this. However, for this to happen the youth must have a mindset change. He was happy that the Council had programmes to support this.



The Secretary-General AAYC welcomes the President APFPD

The President further said that the APFPD was happy to associate with the AAYC. Appropriate feedback would be provided to the Council.

5.0 Field Visit to Reproductive Health Uganda



RHU staff briefs the visiting team on how the digital hub at RHU works

The President of the APFPD led the team comprising of a Member of Parliament, and development partners on a study visit to Reproductive Health Uganda. The study visit which took place on Saturday, February 22, 2025 was jointly hosted by Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU) and Reach A Hand Uganda (RAHU). The President was taken on a Familiarisation tour of the RHU offices and the digital hub before participating in a presentation and discussion that highlighted the work of RAHU, its strategic objectives, opportunities and prospects for the provision of comprehensive sexual reproductive health services.

RHU and RAHU often partner to provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education and services, particularly focused on young people, by combining RHU's clinical expertise with RAHU's youth outreach and advocacy capabilities; essentially, RHU provides healthcare services while RAHU educates and empowers young people to make informed choices about their sexual health.

5.1 About Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU)

Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU) is a non-governmental organisation that pioneered Family Planning in Uganda. Founded in 1957, RHU has evolved into an advocacy, information and service delivery organisation in the family planning and reproductive health space.

RHU exists to improve the quality of life of individuals especially young people, women, girls and the poor and the vulnerable, and strives to create a Uganda where everyone's sexual reproductive health and rights are fulfilled and protected without discrimination. Currently RHU operates 16 branches spread out in all the sub-regions of Uganda.

5.2 About Reach A Hand Uganda (RAHU)

Reach a Hand, Uganda (RAHU) is a youth-serving nonprofit organisation based in Uganda that focuses on youth empowerment programs with an emphasis on, Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and Advocacy of young people between the ages of 10 - 30 years including HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention, and youth livelihoods.

RAHU prioritizes programs designed to equip young people between the ages of 10 and 30 with knowledge and skills to navigate issues related to sexual and reproductive health. A major focus of their work is raising awareness and promoting access to accurate information about sexual and reproductive health rights. They utilize a network of peer educators to reach young people in communities and schools. RAHU also actively incorporates HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention messages into their programs. Beyond health education, they also work to promote skills development and economic opportunities for young people.

5.3 Welcome Remarks from Reproductive Health Uganda



Ms. Kyarimpa, Programmes Director, RHU

The Programmes Director at RHU, Ms. Annette Kyarimpa, warmly welcomed the President of the APFPD and the team to RHU Offices. She explained that the visit had been organized as part of a collaborative arrangement between RHU and RAHU. She spoke about the work of RHU and its strategies to improve service delivery.

Ms. Kyarimpa noted the global gag order from the United States of America that was adversely affecting countries all over the world in terms of reproductive health services. She called upon Members of Parliament at both regional and local levels, represented by the APFPD and the UPFFSPD to reflect on the implications of the gag order and devise strategies on how governments can be supported to take on the mantle to ensure that

reproductive health services are not negatively affected.

5.4 Presentation by Reach A Hand Uganda (RAHU)



Mr. Muhindo shares RAHU programmes and scope

The Acting Country Director of RAHU, Mr. Benson Muhindo, made a presentation about *Status of Youth and Development in Uganda: A Focus on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)*. The presentation elaborated RAHU's programmes and its thematic areas of sexual reproductive health rights, information, services and rights.

Mr. Muhindo noted the challenges of adolescent sexual reproductive health and the stalling of teenage pregnancy over the past decade. He shared the passion behind the organisation's thematic areas, scope and programmes.

Established in 2011, RAHU draws inspiration from the personal life of its founder, Humphrey Nabimanya, who started the organisation when he was 19 years. Humphrey was compelled to educate not only his peers but also other young people about HIV/AIDS at a young age and because of the great conviction and the activities he had engaged in, Humphrey conceptualized the idea of RAHU, then, as a weekend outreach program to interact and inform other young people about HIV/AIDS.

With the increasing need to inform young people about HIV/AIDS, Humphrey expanded RAHU to an officially registered organization in July 2011 as a fully youth-immersed organization. Reach A Hand Uganda today, is still a youth-fronted and youth-concentrated organization focusing on youth empowerment programs with an emphasis on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), HIV/AIDS awareness, and prevention.

As Uganda faces the reality of being one of the youngest countries in the world, with over 78% of its population under the age of 30, the status of youth development is a critical issue that demands immediate and strategic attention. RAHU expressed its commitment to continue advocating for and supporting the development of Uganda's youth, particularly in areas of SRHR, employment, and economic inclusion. Mr. Muhindo said they were pleased to host Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Hassan Pelpuo, President of the APFPD and Minister for Employment, Youth, and Jobs, Government of Ghana, and looked forward to great lessons they could learn from Ghana's experience.

The Current Landscape of Youth Development in Uganda

Uganda's population is growing at an alarming rate, with the most recent census in 2024 reporting a population of over 45 million, projected to double by 2050. This rapid population growth creates both a challenge and an opportunity, particularly when we consider that half of Uganda's population is under the age of 15. However, with young people comes the urgent need to address the persistent problems hindering youth development, particularly in the areas of SRHR, employment, and education.

RAHU continues to work to equip young people in all their diversity with timely and appropriate information, skills, knowledge, and means to enable them live healthy and productive lives. RAHU envisions a world of young people making informed life choices. Mr. Muhindo ended his presentation by making a rallying call to parliamentarians to use organisations like RAHU and RHU and asked how RH advocates on the ground can better support Members of Parliament.

5.4 Peer Educator's Experience

RAHU has been implementing a Peer Educators Academy, which is a mentorship program through which youth are trained, mentored and empowered to become leaders and change-makers. Since 2014, the academy has equipped young people with information and skills enabling them to make informed SRHR choices & reach out to their peers both in and out of school. The Academy begins with a one-month training of 65 to 70 young people annually which is followed by a 1-year fellowship program involving activities in community engagement, advocacy, communication and innovation.



A Peer Educator shares her experiences

One of the Peer Educator's shared her experiences and interactions with young people in slums and refugee settings where the need for information on sexual reproductive health services was clearly demonstrated. Through her interactions with young people in slums, she has learned lessons on the needs of young people and how they can be better supported.

5.5 Plenary, Recommendations and Way Forward



Hon. Lokwang Phillip Illukol, a Member of Parliament from Uganda

1. The Coordinator of APFPD, Mr. Musa Wamala Buyungo appreciated RHU and RAHU for the interventions shared in the presentations. Mr. Wamala requested that the interventions be reviewed and redesigned to cater to youth who do not have access to technology and those who are not literate. The coordinator also requested the two organizations to devise clear Asks that can be presented to Members of Parliament.
2. Hon. Lokwang Phillip Illukol, a Member of Parliament from Uganda appreciated the convenors of the meeting for the lessons they were sharing and the interventions that had been implemented. He requested that context-friendly solutions be designed to respond to the concerns of youth from different backgrounds. He further shared that the Government of Uganda was designing Strategies on how to close the gap arising from the withdrawal of development aid by partners and western countries like the United States. He emphasized that the priority of the Government of Uganda is to support programmes that enhance development and not merely consumptive programmes. The Member of Parliament requested the partners in the meeting to develop priorities and present them to the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Food Security Population and Development, which will advocate and lobby Parliament for due consideration.

3. There is a need to ensure that youth voices are included in decision-making and policy influence space. Nothing should be done for the youth without the youth.

4. It was noted that disability inclusion in Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights was still weak in Uganda. A member sought to learn how Ghana was including youth with disability in all its programmes and provision of services. A request was made to the Uganda Legislators to advocate for disability inclusion in all SRHR services across the country. This will ensure that no one is left behind and services reach even the most vulnerable in society.

5.6 Closing Message from the President APFPD

The President applauded RHU and RAHU for convening a very enlightening meeting. He further appreciated the beautiful innovative presentation that had been made by RAHU and, appreciated all the speakers for the information they had shared and the concerns that had been raised. He pointed out that as rightly shared in the presentations, Africa had a large youthful population that needed critical attention.

The President shared that Ghana set up a youth Ministry to create opportunities for youth and the Government had made a statutory allocation of funds to that Ministry. The Government had further made provisions to distribute free sanitary pads to all girls of menstruating age to avoid scenarios of girls succumbing to trading sex for pads. This is an innovation that can be picked up by other countries. He shared that ruling governments have to be held accountable for the promises they make in their manifestos and in Ghana, he had been tasked as the Minister for Employment to create jobs for the young person and he was exploring supporting government investments in private infrastructure, capacity building, training of teachers and health workers, supporting innovations. Investing in youth as an engine for social transformation was Ghana's priority.

Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Hassan Pelpuo called upon young people in Africa to invest their time productively and innovatively and utilize technology to transform lives and invent new things. He shared that young people from Russia, China were utilizing social media and on-line platforms to invent new things while those in Africa were spending time on fashion and copying what had been done elsewhere. He decried the practice of African youth selling their property to relocate to European countries to provide cheap unskilled labour. This practice must stop. "I want to see an African youth who is confident to be in Africa, who wants to contribute in his home country and create value. Let people understand that your country, Uganda is a great country."

He concluded by saying “Young people must teach us what we want as a nation, as a region. Teach us the things that you think we can learn and catch up with the world. We can no longer live in countries where nothing is invented. Not even a bicycle! Everything is imported. This is where the youth need to come in so that in the future, Uganda will not buy toothpaste from abroad. So you are given a challenge to break away and create value where you are, lift your countries up to compete with others. Thank you very much.”



6.0 Visit to Eco-Tourism Centre of Mabira Forest

As part of the activities organized for the high-level Parliamentarians meeting was a visit to an eco-tourism Centre of Mabira Forest. The team was delighted to visit Mabira Forest Reserve as part of the eco-tourism site visits. The visit happened in the afternoon of Saturday, February 22, 2025.



Group visit to Mabira Forest Reserve

6.1 About Mabira Forest Reserve

Mabira Forest Reserve is a tropical natural rainforest found in the central part of Uganda covering up to 39582 hectares of land. The Forest extends to the Districts of Buikwe, Kayunga, Jinja, Mukono and Kampala. The forest is divided into several parts that include Lwankima, Wanende, Buwoola, Nagojje, Namulaba, Naligita, Nandaji, Kifu, Namanve, Mabira Eco tourism and Naluvule. Various activities are carried out in the forest which include eco-tourism (lodging and hotel services), swimming pool, sauna, nature walks, bird watching, forest trails, running battles, camp fire, monkey tracking, camping, picnics, butterflies and month development.

Benefits of Mabira to the Community: The Community benefits through Collaborative Forest Management. This means that the people who live in the forest participate in management of the forest by;

1. Undertaking sustainable harvesting in the forest. The forest provides one free bundle of firewood to residents of Mabira under the Forest Management Act section 32.
2. Provision of patrols to monitor the forest and look out for encroachers.

The Community also benefits from picking of varied herbs for herbal medicine to treat various ailments. The Forest also provides both hard and soft wood for timber and paper making. There is also provision of employment opportunities through the factories established inside the forest.

However, there are some **negative effects** from the community habitation of the forest. They include;

- i. Deforestation due to the demand for land for settlement, and increased demand for charcoal, firewood, and timber for both domestic use and sale.
- ii. Negative effects of Industrialisation; Various industries have been established in the forests like the sugar factory which has negatively impacted the forest through deforestation and noise pollution.
- iii. Land grabbing by private individuals and firms which claim huge pieces of land.
- iv. Unplanned road network within the forest. The mushrooming industries have led to creation of many small feeder roads which are not well planned. This has also contributed to insecurities within the forest.

6.2 Recommendations and Way Forward.

The presentation on the Mabira Forest Reserve highlighted the opportunities and challenges on eco-tourism. The following recommendations were proposed;

1. Government of Uganda needs to devise alternative fuel products and subsidise on gas to replace firewood and charcoal in order to reduce on the rate of cutting of trees for fuel.
2. Continuous engagement and sensitization with community, leaders and stakeholders to promote the benefits of a sustainable forestry management programme.
3. Restoration of the degraded parts of the Forest.

7.0 Courtesy Visit with Hon. David Bahati, Uganda Minister of Trade



Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Pelpuo discussed trade and employment matters with Hon David Bahati

On Sunday, February 23, 2025, Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Pelpuo, the Minister of Employment, Youth and Jobs in the Government of Ghana, who is also the President of the APFPD, had the opportunity to meet with Hon. David Bahati, the Minister of State for Trade, Industry and Cooperatives (Labour Relations) Cabinet of Uganda.

The two Ministers discussed industrial and labour issues between Ghana and Uganda. Hon. David Bahati welcomed Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Hassan Pelpuo to Uganda and expressed his happiness about the learning programme that Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Hassan Pelpuo had been exposed to during his visit to Uganda. Hon. David Bahati shared that Uganda has a conducive policy environment and the country's industrialization agenda is a credible solution that the Government of Uganda is exploring to respond to the youth unemployment challenge. Ho. Bahati further noted the women empowerment and youth livelihood schemes which are aimed at self-reliance and job creation.

Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Hassan Pelpuo expressed gratitude to the Government of Uganda for initiatives established for youth and women empowerment. He proposed that different African leaders and parliamentarians should have study visits between countries to learn best practices from one another on matters related to labour and employment.

Annex 1: Programme

UGANDA PARLIAMENTARIANS' FORUM ON FOOD SECURITY, POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT. HIGH LEVEL PARLIAMENTARIANS MEETING AND HOSTING OF HON. DR. ABDUL RASHID HASSAN PEPLUO IN UGANDA.

TIME	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY
DAY 1. 20/02/2025		
Arrival of Delegates		
DAY2. 21/02/2025		
High-Level Parliamentarians meeting		
8:30-9:00am	Arrival and registration of participants	UPFFSPD
9:00-10:30am	Opening ceremony, Welcome remarks by Chairperson UPFFSP&D.	Hon Akol Anthony
	Remarks by the UNFPA Country Representative	UNFPA
	Remarks by President APFPD/ Minister of Employment, Youth and Jobs-Governemnt Of Ghana	Hon Dr. Abdul Rashid Pelpuo
	Official Opening by the Rt Hon 3 rd Deputy Prime Minister	Rt. Hon Rukia Isanga Nakadama
	Group Photos	
10:30-11:00	Break tea	
11:00-12:30	Presentations Prospects and Challenges in addressing population issues in Uganda and the role of Parliament in harnessing the Demographic Dividend	National Planning Authority
	SHR and GBV issues. Policy implications	Mr. Checkweko Jackson - RHU
	Recommendations and way Forward	Hon Muwuma Milton
12:30	Lunch and Departure	
14:00- 14:30	Press Conference	UPPA
15:00-.17:00	Visit to African and Arab Youth Council	Hon Agaba Abbass
DAY 2. 22/02/2025		
Field Visit		
10:00-12:00	Visit to Reach a Hand Uganda (RAHU)	UPFFSPD
13:00 -14:00	Lunch	Kampala Kolping Hotel
14:30- 16:00	Visit to Eco Tourism sites	Mabira Forest
DAY 3 23/02/2025		
	Meeting between Ministers on Labour and Employment Relations (Ghana and Uganda)	
	Departure.	

Annex 2: Links and Publications

<https://youtu.be/Bji3esUxXgg?si=NZLFetc6CZFIkme>

<https://youtu.be/0KOnwlBKsDU?si=1m1lyklmdHX3mQTE>

<https://youtu.be/Bji3esUxXgg?si=NZLFetc6CZFIkme>

<https://aayouthcouncil.com/ghanas-minister-pledges-support-afro-arab-youth-council-calls-youth-empowerment-and-population>

https://www.instagram.com/aaycsecretariat/p/DGaiFuilcDI/?img_index=1

<https://x.com/RHUganda/status/1892920994500677696>