ANNUAL YOUTH CLIMATE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM 2024.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Climate change is a global challenge that requires collective efforts to tackle. The UNICEF report (2023) indicates that although young people have been some of the biggest drivers of community change, they barely understand the concept of the climate crisis.

There are over 1.8 billion young people in the world today, 90 percent of whom live in developing countries, where they make up a large proportion of the population. Over 75% of

Uganda's population are below the age of 35 with 34.8% belonging to the age group of 15-30 years (UNICEF, 2022).

The youth also make up the majority of the population most affected by the climate crisis. Global statistics indicate that 80% of the reported victims of climate migration and death are women and young adolescents. This among other factors is attributed to the knowledge gap existing in communities which highlights the need to not only involve but also equip young people with information on climate change and the possible mitigation measures.

There is a need to center youth as leaders in the climate movements. This includes recognizing their potential, talents and enthusiasm, creating meaningful engagements, providing adequate resources and collaborations to scale up their efforts in the fight for climate justice

Young activists are also faced with numerous challenges in their work such as intimidation, harassment, stigmatization, and violent attacks. This highlights the need to enlighten them on security, human rights and policies.

About the program

Fridays for Future Uganda, having organized various youth-led campaigns and adaptation programs, recognizes the essence of actively involving young people in innovative thinking, planning and implementing climate solutions and sustainable projects.

The organization, therefore, designed the climate mentorship program to build and increase the capacity of youth in addressing climate change. The program helps youth to develop skills in climate advocacy, communication, and innovative climate solutions, improves their public speaking, builds confidence, promotes networking, and increases the youth's knowledge and understanding of climate change. The program supports all mentees in their initiatives as it monitors and continues to guide them after completing the mentorship period.

The mentorship program takes 12 weeks of professional guidance, learning, fieldwork, practical experience, and meeting experts in the climate field.

The program has so far benefited two cohorts of climate mentees.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- To promote climate leadership among the youth hence fostering meaningful engagement in climate action.
- To increase climate awareness and advocacy.
- To increase environmental stewardship and consciousness among the young people.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

A. Planning:

I. Placing calls for the interested youth to enroll into the program.

II. Interviews.

III. Developing guiding materials and schedules.

IV. Program launch and induction.

Climate mentees being briefed during the program launch.

B. Mentorship:

The selected participants were trained by climate experts from Astute strategists for a period of twelve weeks. The lead facilitator was Mr. Mugerwa Timothy who worked closely with Mr. David Luganda.

The program involved classroom, outdoor and on-site practical experiences.

Mode of delivery

I. Modules:

The mentorship program was guided by carefully-selected modules that introduced the climate mentees to climate change advocacy. These modules covered a range of topics, from the basic understanding of climate change to designing adaptation strategies. Below is a summary of the modules that were covered:

- **Understanding Climate change**: This module introduced the mentees to the climate crisis and its impacts on the local and global level. They were briefed on the terms used in climate spaces and the role of the IPCC in climate science. The mentors emphasized the value of research and proper use of terms while communicating climate science.

- **Women and climate change:** Climate change affects communities and individuals differently. Women are the most affected at the hands of climate change impacts. This module explained the social and physical factors that increase their vulnerability to climate change. It also highlighted how their resistance can be boosted. It drew on the examples of women who have taken the lead in climate action to emphasize the critical role women can play in the fight for climate justice.
- **Youth and climate change:** Having understood the concept of climate change, the young people need to understand their role in the fight for change. The mentors explained the current obstacles that limit the youth from fully participating in climate action. Some of these issues were the huge knowledge gap and finances. They encouraged the mentees to seek information and also be creative while doing advocacy work.
- **Effective climate advocacy:** The major objective of this session was to ensure that the mentees understand the task they want to take on. The mentors explained that climate advocacy requires dedication, research and persistence. They stressed the need to speak up strategically and to clearly study their audience before communicating. Additionally, they need to educate themselves and connect with other people fighting for climate justice so as to influence opinions and policies.
- **Climate solution/actions and innovations:** This module focused on the conservation efforts that have been put in place to mitigate or adapt to the effects of climate change. It also included a creative thinking exercise where the mentees identified some actions that they can spear-head even with scarce finances. The mentors shared real life examples of the solutions and actions that are being implemented in Uganda and other countries.
- **Developing skills in climate leadership:** Having pledged to take on climate leadership, the young activists were mentored on the principles of good leadership. Each one of them identified their role models and the qualities they admire most. The facilitator urged them to embrace equity, diligence, transparency and the will to make decisions.
- **Engaging in climate adaptation policies: local, national, and international:** It is important for any climate activist to acknowledge the policies and measures put in place to meet the adaptation objectives of the country, region and globe at large. This module introduced the mentees to the climate policies, their implementation strategy and areas of effect. It also elaborated the role of activists in checking incompetent policies and reforms.
- **Effective climate communication:** One of the most important aspects of climate activism is the ability to effectively disseminate information. The mentees were

tasked to identify the means and channels of communication that they would require to pass on their information. The mentors then briefed them on the different techniques that can be utilized to address various kinds of audiences.

- **Designing and implementing your adaptation advocacy strategy:** This module focused on mapping out issues in communities and identifying the measures that can help people to adjust to them and survive even in the presence of these challenges. Each participant was tasked to identify a challenge in their area and design their own adaptation strategy.

Mr.Mugerwa, the lead mentor, delivers a lesson on designing adaptation strategies.

II. On-site learning

Following the theoretical sessions, the program used on-site sessions to teach practical skills in sustainable climate solutions while providing hands-on experience in sustainable innovation and impact assessment. Two on-site sessions were conducted on clean energy alternatives and plastic recycling.

The first session happened in Kayanja town, Mukono district. The mentees were educated on sustainable waste management, aggro-ecology and the feasible energy alternatives. The training was led by Mr. David Luganda, a climate expert. He broadly explained the challenges communities face due to improper waste management and the countless benefits of recycling.The mentees participated in a briquette making exercise guided by Mr. Luganda.

Mentees showcasing their hand-made briquettes.

Mr. Luganda explains the value of aggro-ecology in environmental preservation.

The second on-site session introduced the mentees to plastic recycling. It was facilitated by Mr. Daniel Kayemba and Mr. Sinan Kitagenda, the organizers of Waste plus Uganda. It took place at the Wasteplus recycling center in Masanafu, Kampala. The mentees participated in an interactive lecture on the life cycle of plastic and later on had hands-on experience in plastic description and up-scaling.


Plastic segregation and sorting at Wasteplus recycling center.

Posing with some of the materials made from recycled plastic.

III. Assignments

Throughout the mentorship period, the learners were given various assignments to evaluate their comprehension of the modules and to improve their research abilities.

The tasks were presented, reviewed and corrected as required.

IV. **Personal projects**

Each participant devised their own climate adaptation strategy under the mentor's guidance. This was a gradual process that began by identifying a real-life climate issue in their

communities and proposing the desired changes. They then documented their ideas, outlining the steps necessary to implement the strategies, and shared them with their colleagues to identify potential areas for collaboration.

Some of the strategies included cleaner and cheaper energy alternatives, climate advocacy, plastic reuse, modern farming techniques, tree-planting, among others.

A mentee shares his strategy with the team.

V. Field work

FFU continuously involves the climate mentees in project activities and visits to front-line communities so that they experience the adaptation strategies and conservation efforts in areas that have been adversely affected by climate change.

C. Post-mentorship

Collection of feedback : The mentees were tasked to share their experiences with the organization indicating the acquired skills and achievements. They were also requested to share some recommendations so as to improve on the experience of the next group of mentees.

Graduation and awarding of certificates: The climate mentees class of 2024 graduated on 27th July, 2024. The ceremony was held at Satellite Hotel Kampala and was attended by various invited guests from organizations working around climate action.It was chaired by Ms. Olivia Nakalembe, a prominent environmental journalist and executive director, Karibu travels and tours limited. She appreciated the graduates for seizing the mentorship opportunity and urged them to be strategic and intentional.The executive director Fridays for Future Uganda, Ms. Hilda Flavia Nakabuye shared her journey in climate activism with the

graduates. She encouraged them to stand for a cause and utilize their acquired knowledge to make an impact.

The chief guest, Ms. Susan Nanduddu, executive director at African Centre for Trade and Development (ACTAD E), congratulated the young people for taking up the mentorship program and committing to the end. She encouraged them to identify their purpose and interests and align all their skills so that they can maximize their abilities.

The graduates were awarded certificates of completion and officially recognized as climate activists attached to Fridays for Future Uganda.

The graduates posing for a photo with their guests.

Ms. Flavia shares her story of climate activism with the mentees.

Awarding of certificates.

Ms. Olivia Nakalembe a renowned environmental journalist cheering the guests.

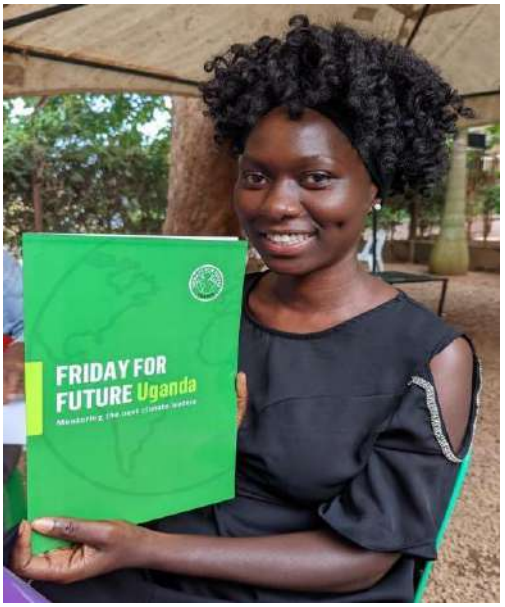
RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- Through the climate mentorship program, 30 young people have been trained in strategic climate advocacy and communication.
- The program has increased climate awareness in schools and communities. The mentees have so far induced two climate awareness campaigns and community clean-up exercises.
- The program has stirred youth participation in environmentally-sound innovation and adaptation. Four of the 2024 mentees have created initiatives in their communities to mobilize their fellow youth to join climate action. Some of the work being done includes plastic upscaling, briquette making, climate photography and writing and mentorship.

- There has also been a steady growth in climate advocacy using social media platforms like X and instagram. The mentees have continuously participated in online campaigns such as the StopEACOP and Save Lake Victoria campaigns.

MEET SOME OF OUR YOUNG ACTORS

I. Mirembe Winnie



Mirembe, a resident of Mbuya 2 founded a community based initiative that reuses plastic to make artifacts and ornaments.
She mobilized young people in her area to not only improve their waste-management practices but also earn from plastic collection and up-scaling.
She has also made an effort to educate her community so as to curb plastic pollution

II. Nakabengwa Whitney

Whitney is a young advocate for clean energy in her community.
She started her journey after attaining briquette-making skills during one of the on-site learning sessions of the mentorship program.
She now makes briquettes for her family and neighbors in Nsambya, thus substituting charcoal usage.
Whitney has hope that she will scale up her initiative so that she supplies the entire area.

III. Kalema Martha

With the knowledge obtained from the mentorship sessions, Martha educates her fellow youth on the climate crisis and practical adaptation measures. She mentors groups of young people with ages ranging from 13-20 years of age.

She also mobilizes her classmates occasionally to take part in community clean-ups, and awareness outreaches.

IV. Leni Barbra Mercy

Barbra converted her passion and skills in Journalism to tell climate stories. Through photography, she is able to showcase the impacts of climate change in communities and the conservation measures being used.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Challenge	Description	Lessons Learned
Logistical issues	The main logistical challenge was conflicting schedules since the majority of the	Flexibility in programming and ample communication.

	mentees were students.	
Lack of commitment	Some of the mentees were inconsistent during the program. Some could not proceed with the program.	Thorough briefing at the start of each program to ensure that all participants understand the guidelines. Logistical provisions for example transport and meals to ensure that the young people are not financially restricted from attending the sessions.
Monitoring and evaluation	Difficulties in determining the impact of the training on the mentees after the program (knowledge retention and involvement in climate advocacy)	Creation a strong feedback mechanism so as to follow up on the young activists.
Proximity challenges	Some of the eligible applicants could not be selected for the program due to proximity issues since the program involved physical sessions. Some of these were natives of other countries including Tanzania, Malawi and D.R. Congo.	Adopting a hybrid format of mentoring that is, adding online classes for participants in remote areas.

NEXT STEPS

Championing climate campaigns and strikes: The mentees will be supported to initiate and effectively champion climate campaigns as well as being drivers of change in their communities.

Project implementation: FFFU will integrate the mentees into the project- implementation teams so as to have a continued real-life learning experience as well as embracing their ideas and perspectives.

Peer to peer learning: The trained youth will support in climate education and advocacy through peer to peer learning during community and school outreaches.

Story telling: The organization will use storytelling, drawing on the experiences of young activists to inspire other young people and emphasize everyone's role in the fight for climate justice

CONCLUSION.

The interest of the youth to participate in climate action has increased with an increase in their understanding of the underlying issues. Through the climate mentorship program, young people have been exposed to the complex link between environmental management and development.

In addition to achieving the set objectives, the program has ignited a wave of passionate activists and change makers in East Africa.

There has been a steady growth of youth-led initiatives and actions in communities. This has increased the interest of young people in climate action and the FFFU climate mentorship program. Building on the success and lessons of the 2024 mentorship program, the 2025 cohort will admit more mentees, expand on their exposure to the climate crisis and equip them with various skills so as to increase impact.

Mentees participating in climate campaigns and programs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I AM
LAKE
VICTORIA
I PROVIDE LIVELIHOOD FOR MILLIONS BUT POLLUTION THREATENS MY EXISTENCE
EACOP THREATENS 1000+ SPECIES IN LAKE VICTORIA
I AM LAKE VICTORIA A SOURCE OF LIFE FOR MILLIONS
#IamLakeVictoria #StopEACOP


SAVE LAKE VICTORIA
STOP EACOP
SAVE LAKE VICTORIA
NO NEW OIL


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