

100 models unveiled ahead of fashion week

BY ANDREW KAGGWA

The Uganda International Fashion Week (UIFW) 2026 has officially unveiled 100 models selected to walk the runway during the 2026 edition of the prestigious fashion showcase, scheduled to take place from June 22 to 27 at the Kampala Serena Hotel.

The unveiling ceremony, held at Makerere University Africa Hall, brought together fashion stakeholders, designers, creatives, models, and industry enthusiasts for a first look at the year's expected to define this year's runway experience.

This year's edition, held under the theme "Fashion for Impact," highlights the growing role of fashion as a driver of economic opportunity, cultural exchange, innovation, and sustainability across Africa.

Supported by the Mastercard Foundation and implemented in partnership with the International Trade Centre and the Bayimba Foundation, the

programme aims to empower young people aged 15 to 35, particularly women and girls, by creating opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and skills development within the fashion industry.

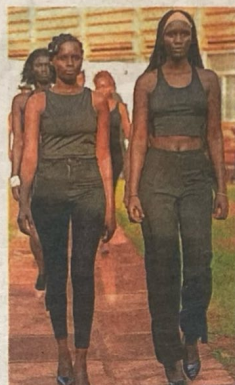
Founded in 2003 by renowned fashion entrepreneur Santa Anzo, UIFW has grown into one of Africa's most influential fashion platforms, connecting designers, creatives, and models to regional and international opportunities.

Over the past two decades, the platform has positioned itself as more than a fashion showcase, using creativity and visibility to support skills development, business growth, job creation, and economic empowerment for young people across the continent.

According to organisers, more than 300 aspiring models responded to the nationwide casting call announced earlier in April, reflecting the growing influence of fashion among Uganda's youth. The rigorous vetting



The models were selected from within and neighbouring countries. PHOTOS/ANDRE KAGGWA



process selected models aged between 15 and 35 from different cultural backgrounds across Uganda and other African countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Kenya, reflecting the event's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

UIFW organisers also highlighted inclusivity as one of the core pillars of this year's edition, with some of the selected models being refugees and persons living with disabilities, including individuals with hearing and speech impairments.

"I was very happy when I learnt that I had made it to the

top 100," said Victoria Adong. "I was timid during the vetting process and thought I stood no chance. I want to use this opportunity to grow my career and brand so that one day I can walk for an international fashion house like Zara."

For the past four weeks, the models have undergone intensive training under the mentorship of runway coach Lincoln Axarya to sharpen their confidence, presentation, and runway skills ahead of the showcase.

"Uganda's fashion industry has come a long way, and there is great potential for it to become a bigger contributor to the

country's economy," said Axarya. Speaking during the unveiling, Anzo described the initiative as a platform for transformation, empowerment, and inclusion.

"Fashion is the second biggest employer in Sub-Saharan Africa," Anzo said. "We want every fabric showcased to contribute to dignified employment and sustainable income. UIFW is about empowering communities through fashion."

She added that the programme aims to improve livelihoods, create employment opportunities, and empower young people, especially women and girls, socially, economically, and mentally.

The 2026 edition of UIFW is expected to attract fashion enthusiasts, buyers, media, creative entrepreneurs, and international guests from across Africa and beyond, further positioning Uganda as a growing hub for fashion, creativity, and cultural exchange.



UIFW founder Santa Anzo says they hope to transform the lives of 9,840 young people.

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