

UWESO REACHED OVER 50,000 BENEFICIARIES BETWEEN 2023 AND 2025 FIRST LADY LAUDS UWESO'S 40-YEAR LEGACY

By Sarah Nabakeeza

The First Lady, Janet Kataaha Museveni, has commended the Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans (UWESO) for its four-decade contribution in supporting vulnerable children, describing its growth as a reflection of compassion, resilience and national commitment.

In a message delivered on her behalf by the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Thomas Tayebwa, at the UWESO Annual General Assembly held at the Office of the President Conference Hall last Thursday, the First Lady, who is the patron, reflected on the organisation's humble beginnings and enduring impact.

"With a heart full of gratitude to God, I can only say, thus far the Lord has helped us," she noted, recalling how UWESO was founded by a group of dedicated Ugandan women responding to the plight of children affected by conflict, poverty and HIV/AIDS.

She emphasised that the organisation's mission remains critical, stressing that, "our mission to improve the quality of life of vulnerable children is not just a charity project, but a responsibility." She added that meaningful transformation lies beyond immediate relief, observing that, "the bridge between survival and success is the environment," and called for investment in education, skills development and strong value systems.

COMMUNITY SELF-RELIANCE

The First Lady also welcomed UWESO's progress in promoting community self-reliance, particularly through empowering caregivers and strengthening grassroots support systems. She said this approach ensures that gains made in supporting



The Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Thomas Tayebwa, (third-left) with some of the UWESO members at the President's Office in Kampala

BETWEEN THE LINES

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vulnerable children are sustained over time.

Mrs Museveni further appreciated the organisation's founders, leadership and partners for their dedication over the years, urging continued collaboration to expand impact and secure a better future for Uganda's next generation.

Presenting the financial report for the period 2023 - 2025, UWESO treasurer Dominic Baru highlighted key funding inflows and expenditures over the past

three years, pointing to both progress and emerging challenges in sustaining operations.

Baru revealed that UWESO received sh13b under a major donor-funded programme supporting vulnerable children in six districts across Teso, Busia and Karamoja. In addition, the organisation secured sh2.6b from the Government in May 2025 through the gender ministry to support the withdrawal, rehabilitation and reintegration of children from the streets.

He further noted that UWESO benefited from sh1.02b from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to fight child labour in coffee-growing districts including Sironko, Bulambuli, Mbale and Kapchorwa.

On internally generated income, Baru reported that rental properties contributed approximately sh2.4b from the property along Lugogo bypass, sh30.5m from the Mbarara

building rented by MTAC, sh3.6m from the Mbale building, and sh20m from renting the Migyera farm land over the review period, while agricultural activities and disposal of assets generated sh344m. Short-term investments, including treasury bills and unit trusts, yielded sh320m.

Fundraising efforts also boosted revenue, with the "Liberation Generation" initiative raising sh850m, alongside sh550m collected from donations during the First Lady's birthday events from friends that include Movit Limited, Ruparelia Group, Atlas Industries and Kirumira family.

However, Baru noted a significant setback following the termination of USAID funding in 2025, which affected programme continuity.

STRATEGIC, INTERVENTIONS

UWESO's chief executive officer Jolly Kaguhangire said despite of

the tightening donor environment, the needs of vulnerable children remain critical. She reported that UWESO has reached over 50,000 beneficiaries between 2023 and 2025 through programmes focused on child protection, education, health and livelihoods.

"We have stepped forward not only with compassion, but with strategic, results-driven interventions," she said. Key achievements include supporting 6,759 children in education, protecting 3,536 from abuse and exploitation, empowering 23,531 youth toward self-reliance and targeted support to 18,378 children and youth. Kaguhangire attributed this progress to strong partnerships with the Government and development partners.

UWESO alumnus and lawyer, Ronald William Asiimwe shared a powerful testimony of transformation, illustrating the organisation's long-term impact on vulnerable children. Orphaned at a young age after losing his parents to HIV/AIDS, Asiimwe said he grew up on the streets of Kampala and Masaka, where he struggled with drug addiction and frequent conflict with authorities. He recalled that his life changed after outreach workers from UWESO engaged him and other street children, offering them hope and a second chance.

"They told us we were important, that we had a future," he said. Through rehabilitation and education support, Asiimwe received his first school materials and an opportunity he said, "rewrote my story."

A qualified lawyer and youth leader today, he credited UWESO for shaping his journey and restoring his dignity.

He said many alumni are now professionals contributing to society, adding that they have launched an alumni initiative to give back and support other vulnerable children.

Kagame buildings in Kampala