



## OPPORTUNITIES



## CAMPUS HUB TO TURN STUDENT IDEAS INTO JOBS

BY ALOYSIOUS KASOMA

**A**t a time when youth unemployment continues to worry policymakers and families across Uganda, a new initiative launched at Makerere University is seeking to transform how students view employment, innovation and community development. The Social Enterprise Campus Hub, recently launched by the Federation of Ugandan Social Entrepreneurs (FUSE) at Makerere University, aims to equip students with entrepreneurial skills, mentorship, and networks that can help them turn ideas into businesses that create both jobs and social impact.

The initiative comes at a time when thousands of graduates leave universities every year with degrees but limited employment opportunities in the formal sector. Organisers believe social entrepreneurship can provide an alternative path by encouraging young people to build enterprises that solve community problems while generating income.

For Karen Mukisa, a first-year biotechnology student at Makerere University College of Natural Sciences and chairperson of the Social Entrepreneur Hub, the initiative represents a new way of empowering students to think beyond traditional employment.

"Social entrepreneurship is about coming up with novel solutions to community challenges. It is not charity, and it is not entirely about profits. It is about creating a positive impact in society," Mukisa said during the launch of the hub.

Mukisa explained that many university students already possess the knowledge and creativity needed to address challenges affecting their communities, but lack platforms that can nurture their ideas into sustainable enterprises.

"We know that young people in universities have the capability and the potential to put social entrepreneurship into action. We want students to think differently and come up with solutions instead of only looking at the job market, which has become very narrow," she said.



PHOTOS BY ALOYSIOUS KASOMA

Makerere University students embraced the first Social Enterprise Campus Hub, launched by the Federation of Ugandan Social Entrepreneurs at Makerere University on May 6

## FROM IDEAS TO ACTION

FUSE officials say the initiative is designed to bridge the gap between classroom learning and practical innovation.

David Luganda, the head of partnerships at FUSE, said social entrepreneurship offers a practical solution to Uganda's unemployment challenge by encouraging students to become creators of opportunities rather than waiting for jobs.

"We have seen many university graduates failing to find jobs. One solution we have identified is supporting and growing social enterprises, starting from universities," Luganda said.

He said social enterprises differ from ordinary businesses because they focus on solving social and environmental problems while remaining financially sustainable.

"The role of social enterprises is to address social problems such as poverty, unemployment, climate change, and emissions within communities while at the same time generating income," Luganda explained.

He added that many young innovators fail to move beyond the idea stage because they

## ENVISIONING A BIGGER PICTURE

The Social Enterprise Campus Hub will organise weekly mentorship sessions, practical training programmes, and networking events where students will interact with successful entrepreneurs and innovators across sectors.

The Hub chairperson, Karen Mukisa, said the initiative will also host innovation competitions and pitch events where students can compete for grants and support to develop their projects.

"We expect to invite successful entrepreneurs to share their stories and practical experiences. We also want students to participate in competitions and pitches that can help them access grants and financing for their ideas," she said.

The programme is hoped to impact more than 1,000 students in its early phases by connecting them to mentors and investors.

lack mentorship, exposure and financing opportunities.

"We have seen many youth ideas remain in incubation hubs without

growing into actual enterprises. These campus hubs are meant to help students move from ideas to implementation," Luganda said.

The

initiative is also targeting women and youth in rural communities who often struggle to access entrepreneurial support and funding.

FUSE has already established partnerships with social enterprises operating in sectors such as healthcare, technology, tourism and renewable energy to expose students to practical experiences and investment opportunities.

## OVER 1,200 ENTERPRISES

Luganda said the federation currently has more than 1,200 registered social enterprises operating across Uganda in sectors including health, environment, transport and technology.

"One of the biggest challenges in

Uganda is the lack of data on social enterprises. Through our systems, enterprises can register, be verified, and also connect to funding and partnerships," he said.

The initiative is expected to expand from Makerere University to other institutions, including Kyambogo University and Ndejje University, as FUSE seeks to build what it describes as a "critical mass of young social entrepreneurs" across the country.

For students like Mukisa, the vision of the campus hub goes beyond creating businesses. It is about building a generation of young Africans capable of solving the problems affecting their own communities.

"When we grow this initiative, we expect to host bigger pitches and partner with organisations that can provide grants because the opportunities are there; they just need the right people to access them," she said.

As Uganda continues to search for solutions to youth unemployment and economic inequality, the Social Enterprise Campus Hub is emerging as a platform that could help turn student ideas into jobs, innovation, and long-term social impact.

## CALL FOR INVESTMENT

Dr Cathy Ikiror Mbidde, the acting manager of the Makerere University Technology and Innovation Centre, has called for greater investment in youth-driven innovation and community-based solutions to address Uganda's social and economic challenges.

Mbidde said communities across Uganda continue to face challenges such as unemployment and limited opportunities, but emphasised that local communities also possess the ideas, skills, and resilience needed to create solutions.

"Instead of focusing only on what communities lack, we should focus on the potential, ideas, and capabilities that already exist within people," she said.

Mbidde added that media platforms should go beyond reporting problems and instead support innovation by amplifying grassroots ideas and connecting innovators to opportunities.



FUSE head of partnerships David Luganda