

News feature

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BY STEPHEN OTAGE

Create green jobs from waste, envoy tells govt

KAMPALA. The British High Commission has advised the government to harness creative ideas from young people on how to manage waste effectively and create jobs to spur a circular economy through recycling.

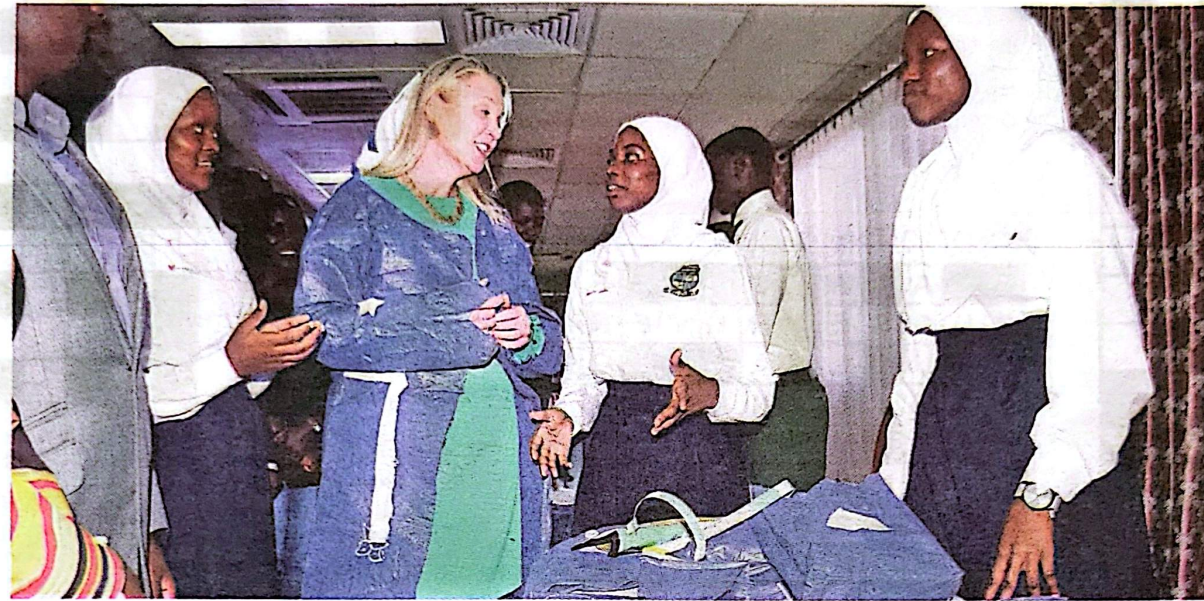
Speaking at the Chevening Alumni Association-funded Students for Sustainable Waste Management Summit last Thursday, Lisa Chesney, the British High Commissioner to Uganda, said Ugandans should stop viewing waste as mere rubbish and instead explore the creative ideas and solutions students are developing in schools to manage it, while also leveraging partnerships arising from such initiatives.

"Change means trying new things, and change starts with you. I am inspired by the creativity, brilliant innovations and ideas that are coming from the students who don't think of waste as rubbish, but have things they are creating out of it," she said.

She explained that the Students for Sustainable Waste Management project, supported by the Chevening Alumni programme Fund through the British High Commission, is a typical example of impactful, sustainable and transformative projects that the British government expects beneficiaries of the one-year Chevening Scholarships to establish upon returning home, to address community challenges.

Some of the areas of focus include climate action, resilient architecture, infrastructure, agro-industrialisation and job creation.

Citing the Kiteezi tragedy in 2024, she said she was recently impressed by a group of youth collecting old polyethyl-



British High Commissioner to Uganda Lisa Chesney (centre) wears a raincoat made from recycled polythene bags by students from Kawempe Muslim SSS at Hotel Africana last week. PHOTO/STEPHEN OTAGE

ene bags and recycling them into ladies' handbags and other crafts.

She added that the Students for Sustainable Waste Management project, affiliated with the British High Commission through Chevening Alumni, have mobilised 10,000 students from the five divisions of Kampala City and brought together 10 schools to address a common issue. It has also created partnerships between schools, Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), the British High

Commission, alumni, parents, teachers and students to translate ideas into practical action—ultimately generating jobs.

Asked what makes the project unique, the project lead, Ms Shamim Ibrahim, said their initial intention was to enrol the 10 schools across Kampala's divisions to assess students' knowledge of waste management.

"In most of the schools, we found several clubs, including environmental clubs with vibrant membership and leadership, but most members had little knowledge about waste management," she said.

At the Uganda Society for the Deaf Vocational School in Rubaga, she noted, it was surprising to learn that students had never been invited to participate in waste management activities outside their usual environment.

However, after training, monitoring and evaluating the intervention, the

team found that many students had developed a keen interest in the subject, with some initiating and designing scalable solutions, projects and programmes within their schools that could be transformed into full-time jobs and employment opportunities.

Ms Ibrahim added that the group is now able to develop a behavioural change communication strategy for Kampala City, empower communities to manage their own waste, and is planning to lobby the government to include waste management in the national school curriculum.

Mr James Bond Kubenero, the deputy director for environment and sanitation management at KCCA, said the initiative has become the authority's flagship project for sustainable waste management, targeting the younger generation.

"We want quick change. The biggest problem is behaviour—waste isn't being sorted, and people end up disposing of it wrongly. People are disposing of waste in water channels and pit-latrines. We are spending a lot of money constructing roads, yet you find someone ignorantly disposing of waste on roads and, when it rains, the roads are washed away. We want the students to carry the message to the parents," he said.

Students from Kawempe Muslim SS, who developed a waste management app bringing together stakeholders in the sector, emerged as top performers at the summit. Other innovations showcased included chandeliers made from waste glass bottles, plastic pavers, water purifiers and furniture made from recycled wood.

