

Young creatives shine as Nick Vujicic backs inclusive talent

BY ISAAC SSEJJOMBWE

There was a moment during the launch of *Beyond The Canvas* when the room started feeling personal.

Not because of the speeches or branding banners, but because of the honesty in the stories being shared.

A few days ago, globally renowned motivational speaker Nick Vujicic stood before a crowd of young people at Reach A Hand Africa's headquarters in Lungujja and spoke about a life many once assumed would be impossible.

Born with tetra-amelia syndrome, a rare condition that left him without arms and legs except for a small foot, Nick recounted how even doctors and family members feared what his future would look like.

"My mother cried, and my father cried because they did not know what their little boy would be able to do," he told the audience. "But with that little foot, I learned how to walk, write, draw, and do many things people never thought would be possible."

It was a fitting voice to headline the launch of the 2026 edition of *Beyond The Canvas*, an initiative by Reach A Hand Africa focused on nurturing tal-



Nick Vujicic gave hope to many young creatives living with disabilities. PHOTOS/ISAAC SSEJJOMBWE

ent among young people living with and without disabilities.

Formerly known as Sauti Canvas, the platform has evolved into something bigger than a talent competition. It now positions itself as a space where creativity, visibility, and inclusion intersect,

particularly for young people often excluded from mainstream opportunities.

This year's edition runs under the theme "*Abilities Beyond Limits*," a phrase familiar in disability advocacy circles but one that carried more

weight because of the conversations surrounding it. The competition, open to young people aged 30 and below, will feature categories including music, dance, spoken word, visual arts, theatre, fashion, cosplay, and garment design.

The finale is scheduled for December



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Beyond the performances, much of the discussion centred on the realities many persons with disabilities continue to navigate long before they step onto a stage.

Nick spoke about the emotional isolation that often comes with public judgment and stigma.

"Sometimes we do not want to leave our homes because people stare at us. Sometimes we do not want to go to school because people bully us," he said. "But your value has nothing to do with how you look or your physical ability."

Speaking during the launch, Reach A Hand Africa's Director of Finance, Daphne Asimmwe, noted that inclusion should go beyond symbolic representation.

"It is not simply about bringing people into spaces," she said. "It is about ensuring those spaces genuinely acknowledge and celebrate their voices, talents, and experiences."

In many ways, the event reflected a wider shift across Uganda's creative and social spaces, where conversations around inclusion are becoming more visible, though still uneven in practice.

TOURISM RECOGNITION