



2026

TESO YOUTH FORUM

FULL REPORT

Harnessing Youth Potential for
Sustainable Development in
Teso and Bukedi

Prepared By:

Teso Elites Development Association (TEDA)

A record of the Teso Youth Forum 2026, capturing youth voices, enterprise and skills priorities, leadership perspectives, evidence, recommendations and pathways for sustainable development across Teso and Bukedi.

Forum Date: 18 July 2026 | Venue: ICU Offices, Soroti, Uganda



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Foreword

The Teso Youth Forum 2026 was convened from a simple conviction: the future of Teso and Bukedi will be shaped not only by the number of young people in the region, but by the quality of opportunities, institutions, networks and confidence available to them. On 18 July 2026, young people, cultural leaders, public officials, professionals and community voices gathered at the Iteso Cultural Union offices in Soroti for a day of practical dialogue on how youth potential can be translated into sustainable development.

The forum created space for honest reflection on the distance between education and employment, the barriers young entrepreneurs face in accessing capital and markets, the importance of financial discipline, and the role of

networks, mentorship and problem-solving leadership. It also placed culture and identity at the centre of development, recognising that economic transformation is strongest when communities retain a sense of belonging, responsibility and shared purpose.

A major milestone of the day was the launch of the TEDA Youth Enterprise Support Fund, conceived as a small but practical mechanism for supporting youth-led enterprises with capital, mentorship, business record-keeping, market access and accountability. The forum repeatedly returned to one message: finance matters, but it works best when young people also have skills, discipline, networks, guidance and a supportive environment in which to act.

“A certificate shows what you have learned, but impact shows what has changed because you learned it.”

Forum message recorded during the session on moving from certificates to impact

This report records the ideas, contributions, challenges and recommendations that emerged from the day. It is intended to preserve the forum's learning, strengthen accountability for follow-through and provide partners with a clear picture of the priorities that young people and regional stakeholders placed on the table.

TEDA extends appreciation to the Iteso Cultural Union, the speakers and guests, the youth participants, the organising team in Soroti and Kampala, and every person who contributed time, experience and ideas. The value of the forum will ultimately be measured by what grows from these conversations: enterprises strengthened, skills applied, relationships built, opportunities opened and communities transformed.

TESO ELITES DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (TEDA)

September 2026

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BoU - Bank of Uganda

FSD Uganda - Financial Sector Deepening Uganda

ICU - Iteso Cultural Union

ILO - International Labour Organization

LMS - Labour Market Survey

NEET - Not in Employment, Education or Training

PDM - Parish Development Model

SACCO - Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisation

SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

TEDA - Teso Elites Development Association

UBOS - Uganda Bureau of Statistics

UNHS - Uganda National Household Survey

USD - United States Dollar

Executive Summary

From dialogue to practical pathways for youth-led development

The Teso Youth Forum 2026 brought together 45 participants and 5 key guests at the ICU Offices in Soroti on 18 July 2026. Convened by the Teso Elites Development Association (TEDA) under the theme “[Harnessing Youth Potential for Sustainable Development in Teso and Bukedi](#),” the forum combined keynote presentations, cultural and civic leadership perspectives, a moderated panel and audience dialogue.

45	5	1 day	8 hrs
PARTICIPANTS	KEY GUESTS	OF DIALOGUE	8:00-16:00

Five priorities dominated the day. First, participants called for a stronger bridge between education and the realities of work, enterprise and community problem-solving. Second, speakers emphasised that young people need access to capital, but that financing should be paired with mentoring, market access, financial discipline and accountability. Third, participants repeatedly highlighted networking, savings, diversified income and practical enterprise as building blocks of resilience. Fourth, cultural identity, family responsibility and unity were presented as assets that can support social and economic transformation. Fifth, the forum stressed action-oriented leadership: seeing problems clearly, organising people and resources, and turning knowledge into measurable results.

The most concrete institutional outcome was the launch of the TEDA Youth Enterprise Support Fund. The initiative set an initial fundraising target of USD 1,500 to support ten youth-led enterprises across Teso and Bukedi. Its proposed model combines financial support with mentorship, business record-keeping, controlled disbursement, monitoring and market linkages.

REPORT STRUCTURE

- **Part One documents the forum and its voices.**
- **Part Two distils the findings, recommendations, outcomes and next steps.**

The forum also surfaced three practical constraints that deserve sustained attention: difficulty identifying viable enterprise ideas, weak resource mobilisation and proposal-development capacity, and gaps in project implementation, monitoring and evaluation. These constraints informed the report's follow-through priorities, which centre on enterprise support, practical skills, financial literacy, networks, agriculture and value addition, leadership, cultural continuity, health awareness and stronger project-management capacity.



“If many Teso young people do many little things, they can change Teso and the whole world.”

Closing reflection recorded from Dr. Cosmas Agweta



PART ONE

THE FORUM: PURPOSE, PEOPLE & VOICES

From context and objectives to the speakers, panel and participant reflections.

Forum at a Glance

18 Jul 2026	Soroti ICU OFFICES	2 SUB-REGIONS	\$1,500 FUND TARGET	10 ENTERPRISES
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Participants follow proceedings during the Teso Youth Forum 2026

Core focus areas

- Education and employment: closing the transition gap between academic learning and market-ready skills.
- Innovation and entrepreneurship: turning ideas, local assets and practical skills into sustainable livelihoods.
- Leadership and governance: building problem-solving leadership and constructive youth participation.
- Financial capability: strengthening saving, investment, diversification and responsible money management.
- Culture and identity: preserving Iteso identity, values, intergenerational learning and social cohesion.
- Networks and mentorship: connecting young people to people, markets, knowledge and opportunities.
- Agriculture and local enterprises: treating farming, livestock, agro-processing and related value chains as businesses.
- Health and wellbeing: recognising that sustainable livelihoods depend on responsible personal and community health choices.

Background, Purpose and Objectives

Why the forum was convened

Young people across Teso and Bukedi face a difficult transition from school to work. The minutes recorded concern about unemployment and underemployment, limited access to start-up capital, weak market linkages and the mismatch between some forms of academic training and the demands of the labour market. Participants also described a wider challenge of confidence and opportunity: many young people have ideas, energy and qualifications, but do not always have the networks, mentoring, resources or practical pathways needed to convert those assets into sustainable livelihoods.

TEDA convened the forum as a platform for dialogue, mentorship and collaboration between young people and regional stakeholders. The event sought to connect economic empowerment with leadership, culture and social responsibility rather than treating youth unemployment as a stand-alone problem.

Forum objectives

- Generate practical and actionable ideas for sustainable development in Teso and Bukedi.
- Bridge the gap between education, skills and employment or enterprise opportunities.
- Strengthen youth leadership awareness and encourage constructive engagement with institutions and leaders.
- Create networking and mentorship opportunities for young people with ideas for community and business initiatives.
- Promote collaboration across youth, cultural institutions, public leadership, business and development actors.
- Encourage young people to move from certificates and ideas toward applied knowledge, enterprise and measurable community impact.

Opening protocol

The programme opened with the Uganda National Anthem, the ICU Anthem and an opening prayer. This set a tone that connected national citizenship, cultural identity and community responsibility before the day's economic and leadership discussions began.

Opening Session and Team lead Address

Youth potential, unemployment and the need for practical systems of support



A speaker addresses participants during the forum.

Fraide Solomon, Lead of TEDA, welcomed participants and thanked the organising teams in Soroti and Kampala for coordinating the forum. His presentation positioned youth unemployment as a systems challenge rather than simply a shortage of ideas. He argued that many young people possess the ambition to create livelihoods but face barriers in accessing capital, business management support and markets.

He linked these barriers to a broader development concern: when young people remain unemployed or underemployed, the consequences extend beyond individual income to household poverty, social frustration and lost productive potential. His response was therefore not limited to employment creation. He called for an ecosystem that combines

entrepreneurship, financial support, mentorship, business development services, market opportunities and accountability.

From diagnosis to intervention

The address referred to experience from youth livelihood and opportunity programmes to make a central point: start-up capital can help, but finance by itself is rarely enough. Young entrepreneurs also need guidance in planning, record-keeping, financial discipline, market development and continuous monitoring. This logic formed the basis for the TEDA Youth Enterprise Support Fund launched during the forum.



“Unlocking youth potential requires more than financial support.”

Fraide Solomon

Spotlight: TEDA Youth Enterprise Support Fund

A practical mechanism for moving youth ideas toward viable enterprises

USD 1,500	10	2	1
INITIAL TARGET	YOUTH ENTERPRISES	SUB-REGIONS	STRUCTURED MODEL

The forum marked the official launch of the TEDA Youth Enterprise Support Fund. The initiative was presented as a structured enterprise-support programme rather than a donation scheme. Its proposed value lies in pairing modest financial support with the non-financial inputs that often determine whether a small business survives mentorship, record-keeping, market access, financial management and regular follow-up.

Proposed enterprise areas

- Agro-processing and value addition.
- Poultry, livestock and other small-scale agricultural enterprises.
- Food processing and baking.
- Tailoring and fashion.
- Phone and computer repair.
- Spare-parts maintenance and related technical services.
- Clean-energy products and services.
- Retail and other locally viable small businesses.

Expected outcomes

- Ten youth-owned enterprises supported through an initial pilot.
- Improved business planning and financial management.
- Better record-keeping and accountability among beneficiaries.
- Stronger market access and support toward first or increased sales.
- Greater entrepreneurial confidence and practical business capability.
- Local job creation and stronger community-level economic activity.

Accountability design

The proposal included beneficiary selection criteria, project documentation, controlled disbursement of funds or materials, monitoring visits and periodic progress reporting. TEDA also outlined partnership categories such as Founding Partners, Project Sponsors, Innovation Friends, In-kind Partners, Technical Partners, and Media and Visibility Partners.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The fund converts a recurring forum message into an institutional response: young people need access to capital, but capital should be accompanied by mentoring, markets, business discipline and evidence of progress.

Identity, Culture, Unity and Social-Economic Transformation

Contribution from Stephen Omoding, Assistant Resident City Commissioner, Soroti City



A forum speaker addresses the youth participants.

Stephen Omoding placed cultural identity and community cohesion at the centre of development. He argued that economic progress should not require young people to lose their connection to their identity, history and institutions. His contribution emphasised cultural confidence, patriotism, family responsibility, respect for elders and unity as foundations for a stronger community.

Culture as a development asset

The presentation called for stronger preservation of Iteso identity and cultural institutions. Omoding encouraged communities to maintain knowledge of their history, strengthen cultural celebrations and create deliberate opportunities for elders to pass values and guidance to younger generations. He also linked strong families to responsible citizenship and social stability.

Unity and collective responsibility

A second theme was togetherness. Participants were encouraged not to view Teso as powerless or fragmented, but to recognise that community transformation can begin with small groups that are disciplined and committed. Soroti City was described as an important centre for the wider region, and TEDA was encouraged to continue building a platform that connects identity with practical social and economic action.

From Certificates to Impact

Leadership, networking, investment and economic empowerment

Marcus Ariong's presentation asked participants to think beyond the accumulation of qualifications. His central distinction was between learning as an achievement on paper and learning as a resource that changes livelihoods, institutions or communities. The practical question was not simply what a young person has studied, but what that knowledge enables them to solve, create or improve.



"A certificate shows what you have learned, but impact shows what has changed because you learned it."

Moses Ariong

Four practical capabilities

- Networking: build credible relationships that open access to knowledge, support, markets and opportunities.
- Leadership: treat leadership as the ability to identify problems and organise solutions, not simply as possession of a title.
- Investment: diversify income and avoid dependence on a single source where possible.
- Application: convert education and training into practical work, enterprise, community service or innovation.

Saving and investment discipline

The session encouraged participants to spend below their means where possible, save consistently, reduce unnecessary expenditure and consider diversified forms of investment. Savings groups, formal savings channels, investment clubs and personal business activities were cited as possible tools. The emphasis was on habit and discipline rather than waiting for a large income before beginning to save.

Start from available assets

Young people were challenged to examine what they already possess - skills, relationships, small livestock, land access, time, knowledge or a marketable service - and ask how those assets could be developed into economic opportunities. The same thinking was applied to farmer groups, where pooled savings, lending and joint investment can strengthen members' ability to act.

Youth Leadership and Financial Discipline

Perspectives from Mercy Marion Alupo and Hon. Shaban Abas

Building opportunity closer to home

Mercy Marion Alupo, representing ICU Youth Leadership, reflected on why many young people leave Teso for Kampala after completing their education. She framed migration as a search for opportunity rather than a rejection of home: young people often go where they believe the future is more visible. Her response focused on building belief, practical action and stronger local opportunity networks.



“What is missing is not money but belief and action.”

Mercy Marion Alupo

She highlighted mentorship, links to markets and access to business and marketing skills as forms of support that youth leadership structures can help provide. Her message encouraged young people to create employment where possible and to work collaboratively rather than in isolation.

Saving as discipline

Hon. Shaban focused on personal financial discipline, diversified income and individual responsibility. He described saving not simply as a technical skill but as a repeated discipline: income must be managed deliberately if it is to create future options. He also urged young people to understand their values, cultivate patriotism and take responsibility for the choices that shape their economic lives.

On public youth-support interventions, he acknowledged that programmes exist while also noting shortcomings and differences in how young people are able to use them. His emphasis remained on agency: young people should approach available opportunities with preparation, discipline and a clear plan for productive use.

Culture, Responsibility and Local Economic Transformation

Messages from Francis Edison Echodu and John Enomu



A guest speaker during the forum programme.

Francis Edison Ecodu: work, time and responsible leadership

Francis Edison Ecodu, Deputy Prime Minister of the Iteso Cultural Union, addressed the forum while representing the Emorimor. His message connected cultural responsibility with practical work. He encouraged young people to manage time well, remain innovative, avoid pride that prevents them from doing useful work, and strengthen associations that enable people to organise around shared interests.

A fuller summary in the minutes records his encouragement for youth to embrace education, skills development, entrepreneurship and innovation while preserving Teso culture, identity and values. He called for responsible leadership, unity, respect for elders and active participation in community development.

John Enomu: agriculture as a business pathway

John Enomu, Mayor of Soroti City West Division, responded to questions about support for young people and **placed strong emphasis on mindset and productive enterprise**. He urged youth to focus on activities that can generate income and to diversify farming rather than depend on a single activity.

Poultry and sheep rearing were among the examples highlighted. TEDA's public post-event communication similarly captured Enomu's call for young people to treat agricultural diversification as a real business opportunity. He also reminded participants that economic ambition should be accompanied by responsible health choices, because personal wellbeing affects the ability to work, invest and sustain progress.

Panel Dialogue: From Certificate to Impact

Moderated by Richard Anguyo



Panel discussion during the Teso Youth Forum 2026.

The panel translated the forum theme into a direct question: what does it mean to move from a certificate to impact? The discussion focused on the difference between possessing academic credentials and being able to apply knowledge, solve problems, earn an income and create value for others.

Moses Ariong: knowledge must become productive

Moses Ariong described “**hustling**” as the practical search for solutions and legitimate income. He argued that education should provide knowledge and skills for survival and service, not simply certificates. His contribution emphasised three tools: networking as social capital, leadership as problem-solving, and financial literacy as the ability to earn, manage, save and invest money responsibly.

He encouraged young people to diversify income, avoid dependence on a single opportunity, and take every learning opportunity seriously by asking how new knowledge can be converted into productivity. Networking, in this framing, is not ceremonial contact-building; it is the deliberate cultivation of relationships that can provide information, markets, mentorship and collaboration.

Dr. Cosmas Agweta: growth mindset and organised investment

Dr. Cosmas Agweta encouraged a growth mindset and hands-on action. He argued that certificates have limited value when they are disconnected from practical capability. Saving, business, investment and agriculture were presented as mutually reinforcing pathways, with investment clubs and small enterprises offered as accessible entry points for young people who may not have substantial capital.

He also encouraged participants to conduct personal SWOT analysis - understanding their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats - and to seek guidance where needed. His closing message captured the forum’s broader philosophy of cumulative action: regional transformation can be built from many small, disciplined contributions.

Audience Reflections

Participant responses that extended the main sessions



Participants during the interactive sessions.

Adapt when an approach is not working

A participant identified in the minutes as a “Caring Adult” warned against remaining locked into an enterprise that is consistently failing without reviewing the model. Her contribution framed adaptability as part of entrepreneurship. She also widened the meaning of saving: a household can save not only by depositing money, but by reducing avoidable expenditure, for example through household food production where practical.

Education is lifelong

Benjamin Alito reflected on education and curriculum, arguing that people must continue adjusting as society changes. He stressed that learning does not end with formal schooling and drew attention to social and moral infrastructure alongside academic knowledge.

Work beyond the field you studied

Caroline Akello emphasised effort and adaptability. She encouraged young people not to limit themselves to the exact field in which they studied, but to consider legitimate income-generating activities that can strengthen their livelihoods. She also encouraged participants to show interest in available government programmes, citing PDM as an example.

“Do not chase jobs but create them; do not work in isolation, but hold on to each other’s hands.”

Youth leadership message recorded during the forum

EVIDENCE SNAPSHOT

THE ISSUES WE RAISED, IN NUMBERS

JOBS, EDUCATION & THE MOVE FROM CERTIFICATES TO IMPACT

Evidence from Teso, Bukedi, Uganda and the wider youth employment picture

TESO
YOUTH FORUM
2026
EVIDENCE SNAPSHOT

i

The forum raised unemployment, the difficult move from school to work, the value of practical skills and the need to turn learning into livelihoods. The forum raised the issue; the evidence below shows its scale.

FROM
DISCUSSION
TO EVIDENCE
TO ACTION

1

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IS ESPECIALLY HIGH IN TESO AND BUKEDI

Age 15-24

17.9%

UGANDA

Youth unemployment, age 15-24

[S1] LMS 2025

32.8%

TESO

Youth unemployment, age 15-24

[S1] LMS 2025

37.1%

BUKEDI

Youth unemployment, age 15-24

[S1] LMS 2025

↗

What this means Bukedi was a little more than twice the national rate, while Teso was nearly twice the national rate. The employment pressure discussed at the forum is unusually concentrated in these two sub-regions.

2

MANY YOUNG PEOPLE ARE OUTSIDE BOTH WORK AND LEARNING

NEET, age 18-30

50.9%

UGANDA

Not in employment, education or training

[S2] Census 2024

58.0%

TESO

Not in employment, education or training

[S2] Census 2024

62.4%

BUKEDI

Not in employment, education or training

[S2] Census 2024

6+

More than 6 in every 10 young adults aged 18-30 in Bukedi, and almost 6 in 10 in Teso, were outside employment, education or training at the 2024 Census.

3

THE SAME AGE GROUP SHOWS A SHARP WORLD-TO-REGION GAP

NEET, age 15-24

20.4%

WORLD
NEET, 2023

[S3] ILO 2024

42.6%

UGANDA
NEET, age 15-24

[S2] Census 2024

44.3%

TESO
NEET, age 15-24

[S2] Census 2024

47.6%

BUKEDI
NEET, age 15-24

[S2] Census 2024

2x

Using the same 15-24 age band, Teso and Bukedi recorded NEET shares more than twice the 2023 global rate reported by the ILO.

4

A CERTIFICATE DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY BECOME SECURE WORK

22.6%

Completed secondary
Youth unemployment among Ugandans aged 15-24 who completed secondary school.

[S2] Census 2024

28.2%

Specialised training +
Youth unemployment among those with post-primary specialised training and above.

[S1] LMS 2025

94.2%

Informal work
Employed youth aged 15-24 in informal work, excluding agriculture.

[S1] LMS 2025

37.0%

Subsistence agriculture
Youth aged 15-24 engaged in subsistence agriculture only.

3 in 4

Sub-Saharan Africa
ILO estimate: three in four youth lack secure work.

[S3] ILO 2024

600k-700k

New entrants each year
Young Ugandans entering the labour market every year.

[S1] LMS 2025

[S4] World Bank 2026

SOURCES

[S1] UBOS, Labour Market Survey Report 2025 [source](#) | [S2] UBOS, National Population and Housing Census 2024, Final Report Vol. I [source](#) | [S3] ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024 [source](#) | [S4] World Bank, Uganda jobs and prosperity strategy, 2026 [source](#)

TESO YOUTH FORUM 2026 | EVIDENCE SNAPSHOT

THE ISSUES WE RAISED, IN NUMBERS

HOUSEHOLDS, FINANCE, AGRICULTURE & MARKET ACCESS

Why enterprise support, saving, value addition and market linkages mattered in the forum

TESO
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EVIDENCE SNAPSHOT

FROM DISCUSSION
TO EVIDENCE
TO ACTION

i The regional reality
The forum focused on capital, saving, agriculture, markets and enterprise. Official data show why these issues matter in households facing poverty, subsistence production and limited digital access.

5

POVERTY IS ALMOST TWICE THE NATIONAL RATE IN BOTH SUB-REGIONS

Income poverty

16.1%

UGANDA

Income poverty

[S5] UNHS 2023/24

29.8%

Income poverty | TESO
709,100 poor persons

[S5] UNHS 2023/24

29.9%

BUKEDI

Income poverty | 718,400
poor persons

[S5] UNHS 2023/24

Teso and Bukedi were close to 30% poverty, almost twice the national rate - reinforcing the forum focus on income generation, saving and enterprise.

6

NEARLY HALF OF HOUSEHOLDS REMAIN IN THE SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY

Household shares

33.1%

UGANDA
In subsistence
economy

23.5

Subsistence
households
benefiting from
PDM

[S2] Census 2024

47.3%

TESO
In subsistence
economy

29.6%

Subsistence
households
benefiting from
PDM

[S2] Census 2024

49.9%

BUKEDI
In subsistence
economy

18.4%

Subsistence
households
benefiting from
PDM

[S2] Census 2024

7

AGRICULTURE IS ALREADY THE ECONOMIC BASE - THE CHALLENGE IS VALUE AND MARKETS

Households engaged

62.3%

UGANDA

Households engaged in agriculture

[S2] Census 2024

87.1%

Households engaged in agriculture | Highest sub-regional share

[S2] Census 2024

75.3%

BUKEDI

Households engaged in agriculture

[S2] Census 2024

Nationally, 80.2% of agricultural households mainly farmed for home consumption. The forum's value-add focus speaks to moving production toward cash income and markets.

8

MARKET ACCESS IS ALSO A CONNECTIVITY PROBLEM

Population age 10+

43.3%

UGANDA
Own a
mobile
phone

8.9%

Used
internet

[S2] Census 2024

32.8%

TESO
Own a
mobile
phone

4.3%

Used
internet

[S2] Census 2024

34.0%

BUKEDI
Own a
mobile
phone

4.0%

Used
internet

[S2] Census 2024

Market-access signal Low phone and internet use means online marketing cannot be assumed; physical networks, radio and buyer connections remain important.

9

FINANCIAL DISCIPLINE IS A NATIONAL PRESSURE, NOT JUST PERSONAL ADVICE

7 in 10 Budget deficit Adults who needed more money than they earned to cover their personal budget. [S6] FinScope 2023	94% Unexpected expenses Adults reporting an unexpected expense/event in the previous year. [S6] FinScope 2023	1 in 2 Youth planning gap Youth with no strategy to be financially secure in future. [S6] FinScope 2023
81% Financially included Adults using at least one formal or informal financial service. [S6] FinScope 2023	64% Use mobile money Adults using mobile money, the most-used formal provider. [S6] FinScope 2023	44% vs 22% Why people borrow Among borrowers still repaying: 44% cited regular expenses; 22% business purposes. [S6] FinScope 2023

SOURCES

[S2] UBOS, National Population and Housing Census 2024, Final Report Vol. I [source](#) | [S5] UBOS, Uganda National Household Survey Report 2023/24 [source](#) | [S6] FinScope Uganda 2023 Findings Summary (BoU/FSD Uganda/UBOS) [source](#)



PART TWO

FINDINGS, PRIORITIES & THE WAY FORWARD

What the forum revealed, what it achieved, and what should happen next.

Thematic Findings

What the day revealed across presentations, panel discussion and audience contributions

1. Education must translate into capability

The forum did not reject formal education; it challenged young people and institutions to judge education by what learners can apply. Practical skills, problem-solving, enterprise and service were repeatedly presented as the bridge between certificates and impact.

2. Capital is necessary, but not sufficient

Access to finance emerged as a major constraint. At the same time, speakers consistently argued that money without mentoring, discipline, record-keeping, market access and accountability can fail to produce sustainable enterprise.

3. Networks are economic infrastructure

Networking was described as social capital. Relationships can connect young people to mentors, customers, technical knowledge, markets, collaborators and sources of finance.

4. Financial discipline starts before high income

Saving and investment were framed as habits that can begin at a modest level. The forum promoted responsible expenditure, diversification, investment clubs and collective savings as ways to build resilience.

5. Agriculture remains a major youth opportunity

Poultry, livestock, agro-processing, value addition and farmer groups featured throughout the forum. The emphasis was on treating agriculture as a commercial activity that requires planning, markets and diversification.

6. Culture and development can reinforce one another

Cultural identity, family responsibility and intergenerational learning were not treated as separate from development. Speakers argued that confident, cohesive communities are better placed to organise and pursue long-term transformation.

7. Mindset matters when paired with systems

Many contributions stressed belief, growth mindset and personal responsibility. The forum also recognised structural barriers such as capital, markets, skills mismatch and project-management gaps. Sustainable progress therefore requires both individual agency and stronger support systems.

8. Youth participation should lead to action

TEDA positioned the forum as more than a speaking platform. The launch of the enterprise fund and the practical recommendations on mentoring, savings, markets and project management reflected an expectation that dialogue should produce follow-through.

Challenges Identified

Three practical bottlenecks surfaced clearly in the forum minutes

Challenge	How it appeared in the discussion	Practical response
Enterprise identification	Young people may struggle to identify a viable project, enterprise or idea that matches their skills, resources and market reality.	Ideation support, opportunity mapping, simple feasibility assessment and mentoring.
Resource mobilisation	Even a good idea can stall when the promoter cannot organise money, land, partners or a strong proposal.	Proposal writing, budgeting, partnership development, savings/SACCO pathways and investor readiness.
Implementation, monitoring and evaluation	Projects can lose direction when progress is not tracked, records are weak or corrective action comes late.	Simple work plans, records, milestones, mentoring check-ins and basic monitoring tools.

Cross-cutting barriers

The recommendations also pointed to internal barriers that can weaken collective progress: a limiting mental attitude, missed learning opportunities, confusion between leadership and command, internal conflict, unhealthy competition and failure to collaborate. These observations reinforced the forum's emphasis on networks, shared learning and responsible leadership.

Recommendations and Follow-through Priorities

A practical agenda emerging from the forum

1 Operationalise the Youth Enterprise Support Fund Develop transparent selection criteria, a simple application process, mentorship arrangements, controlled disbursement, business records and periodic monitoring for the first ten enterprises.	2 Create practical enterprise clinics Run short sessions on idea selection, customer discovery, budgeting, proposal writing, pricing, record-keeping, marketing and basic monitoring and evaluation.	3 Build a mentor and market-linkage network Connect youth entrepreneurs with business owners, professionals, technical experts, cultural leaders, financial institutions and buyers across Teso, Bukedi and the diaspora.
4 Strengthen saving and investment culture Encourage savings groups, responsible personal saving, investment clubs and financial-literacy sessions that focus on discipline, risk and diversification.	5 Promote agriculture and value addition as business Support young people to identify commercially viable opportunities in poultry, livestock, agro-processing, food production, repair services and related value chains.	6 Create structured intergenerational dialogue Use future forums and community sessions to connect youth with elders and cultural leaders on identity, history, family responsibility and the relationship between culture and development.
7 Develop youth problem-solving leadership Design activities that allow young people to lead small community projects and be assessed on results, collaboration and learning rather than titles alone.	8 Integrate health and wellbeing into livelihoods work Continue linking economic empowerment with health awareness so that young people can protect the human capacity on which their education, work and enterprises depend.	9 Track commitments and learning Document forum resolutions, responsible actors, timelines and progress at subsequent engagements so that the forum becomes a cycle of dialogue, action, review and improvement.

Outcomes and Significance

What the forum achieved on the day

The forum's value lay in bringing several development conversations into one room. Youth employment was connected to skills, finance, markets, culture, health, leadership and institutional support rather than treated as a single-issue problem. Participants heard from cultural leadership, public leadership, youth representatives, professionals and peers, giving the day an intentionally intergenerational character.

Immediate outcomes

- The TEDA Youth Enterprise Support Fund was launched with an initial USD 1,500 fundraising target and a first cohort goal of ten youth-led enterprises.
- Participants received practical messages on saving, investment, diversification, networking, leadership and enterprise development.
- The discussion identified clear capacity gaps in ideation, resource mobilisation, proposal development, implementation and monitoring.
- The forum strengthened the link between youth economic empowerment and cultural identity, unity and intergenerational responsibility.
- Speakers and participants reinforced the need for collaboration rather than isolated effort, particularly in accessing markets, mentorship and finance.
- The meeting closed with a shared commitment to work together in implementing proposed activities and maintaining momentum beyond the event.

Institutional significance for TEDA

For TEDA, the forum demonstrated a model that can be developed into a recurring regional platform: convene young people and decision-makers, surface practical barriers, connect participants to expertise and networks, launch or review targeted interventions, and document what changes between one forum and the next. TEDA's public profile describes the organisation's work around education, health awareness, cultural preservation, leadership and youth economic empowerment; the forum brought those strands together in one programme.



Discussion and exchange among forum participants and guests.

Looking Ahead

Turning one day of dialogue into a cycle of measurable action

The strongest test of the Teso Youth Forum 2026 is what happens after the event. The discussions produced a clear direction for follow-through: support a small number of enterprises well; improve practical business and project skills; strengthen networks; promote saving and diversified livelihoods; deepen intergenerational dialogue; and continue giving young people meaningful roles in shaping development priorities.

A practical next-cycle framework

Enterprise support

Recruit and mentor the first cohort under the Youth Enterprise Support Fund and document progress, challenges and lessons.

Skills to impact

Organise practical clinics on enterprise design, proposal writing, financial management, marketing and monitoring.

Networks and markets

Create deliberate linkages between youth, businesses, financial institutions, professionals, diaspora networks and buyers.

Youth and culture

Continue intergenerational conversations that connect cultural identity with leadership, enterprise and community responsibility.

Evidence and accountability

Publish simple progress updates that show what was promised, what was implemented and what participants are learning.

Regional reach

Maintain the Teso-Bukedi focus by ensuring future engagement deliberately reaches young people and partners across both sub-regions.

“Do not work in isolation; hold on to each other’s hands.”

Forum message on collaboration and collective progress

The forum's central lesson is therefore practical: youth potential is not unlocked by motivation alone. It is unlocked when ambition meets skills, capital, networks, culture, accountability and repeated opportunities to act.

Selected Forum Voices

Portrait circles are intentionally left open so TEDA can insert the final approved speaker photographs before publication.

Memorable messages recorded during the day



“Unlocking youth potential requires more than financial support.”

Fraide Solomon-Team Lead



“Protect your identity as an Iteso, strengthen your cultural institutions, build strong families and work together for social-economic transformation.”

Mr. Stephen Omoding-City Commissioner



“A certificate shows what you have learned, but impact shows what has changed because you learned it.”

Mr. Moses Ariong-Researcher & Policy Dev't Analyst, Agri Food Systems



“What is missing is not money but belief and action.”

Hon. Mercy Marion Alupo



“The responsibility to transform your life is with you.”

Hon. Shaban Aban



“Do not chase jobs but create them; do not work in isolation, but hold on to each other’s hands.”

Forum youth leadership message



“If many Teso young people do many little things, they can change Teso and the whole world.”

Dr. Cosmas Agweta

Photo Gallery

Scenes from the Teso Youth Forum 2026



Forum participants in a group photograph.



Young people following the forum proceedings.



Panel dialogue during the programme.



A speaker contributes during the forum.



Cultural leadership presence during the forum.



Participants exchange ideas during the interactive sessions.

PHOTO RECORD

The photographs included in this report were drawn from the image record embedded in the official forum minutes.

Acknowledgements and Documentation Note

Acknowledgements

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Public communications.

TEDA website: <https://tedauganda.org/>

TEDA on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/teda-youth>

Teso Youth Forum 2026 LinkedIn post: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/teda-youth_tesoyouthforum2026-tesoyouthforum2026-activity-7480161573601456128-fDqv

TEDA on X: @tedayouthteso: <https://x.com/tedayouthteso>

THEME

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