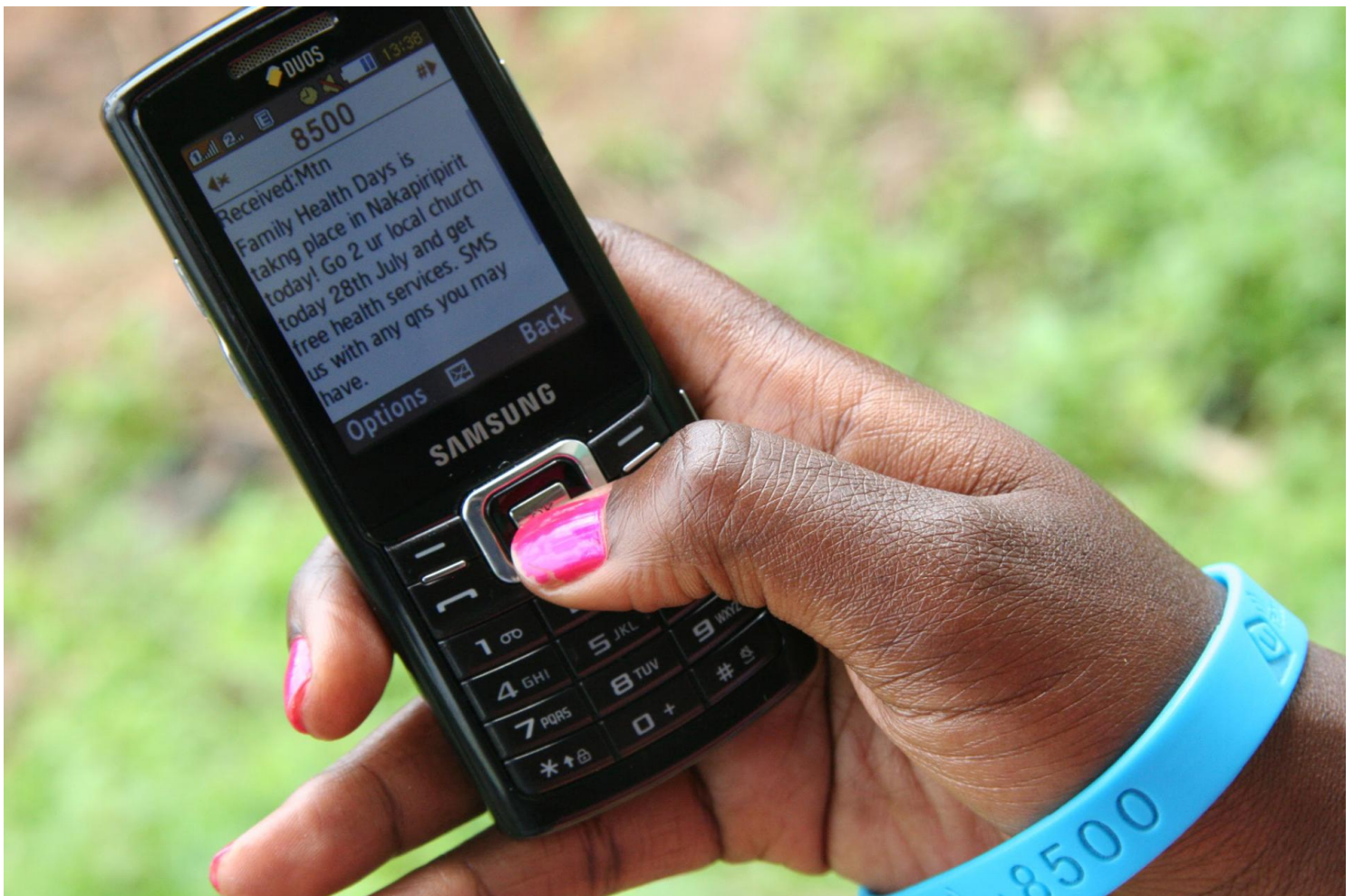Uganda

< Home

Innovations

⬡ Programme

U-Report

Amplifying voices for young people

© UGDA/2015/Atef

The situation

Uganda has the second youngest population in the world. More than three quarters (78 per cent) of its citizens are below the age of 35, and this youthful population is projected to double in the next 25 years. As a result, stresses on the education, health, and protection systems designed to support healthy children and youth will only grow.

Luckily, young people in Uganda today are accessing information through digital technology like never before, and using it to make their voices heard. This has opened opportunities for greater citizen engagement. There is growing recognition that in order to create an inclusive and responsive society in Uganda, citizens, and especially the youth, need to be at the centre of policy-makers' considerations; not just as targets, but also as agents. The aim is to develop policies and design services that respond to individuals' needs, and that are relevant to their circumstances.

Uganda, with support from UNICEF and other partners, has been able to make use of innovative communication technologies to promote an open and collaborative relationship with its citizens.

Interactive web and mobile tools are being developed to promote stronger dialogue on nearly every aspect of civic life, and enabling powerful two-way communication between Uganda's leadership and constituents.

What is U-report?

Launched in 2011, u-report is a free SMS-based platform that allows Ugandans to report on issues affecting them and their communities as well as to get real-time information

and feedback on new initiatives or campaigns.

After registering for free by texting the word 'join' to 8500, U-reporters receive weekly polls asking for their opinions on issues such as health care, education, protection, and other available services in their communities.

Answers are analysed and displayed on a public dashboard. They are then mapped according to district level and compiled on a national level. Results are shared with all U-reporters. Emerging issues are explored further via additional questions and responses.

The aim is to build a cohesive citizen-led dialogue on social development and human and child rights which can be communicated to policy-makers and publicized in the media to influence social change.

Without a doubt, the mobile technology innovations that have been invested in, here in Uganda, are greatly helping to measure our progress along the results chain.

Omar Abdi, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director

Achievements

- U-Report has a vibrant community of more than 300,000 members that is growing by 150 to 250 people every day. Many of them are influencers who play a positive role in the development of their communities.

- 78 per cent of U-Reporters believe that the platform is "a way to voice my opinion" and more than 50 per cent think that it has led to some or many changes in their community. More than 75 million messages have been exchanged with citizens since 2011.

- With 15 local by-laws and ordinances passed, in part due to U-Reporter feedback, U-Report is enhancing social accountability for child rights at the sub-national level.

- U-Report is having a direct influence on policy-making. For example, 40,000 SMS messages were received and considered in the drafting of a peace policy and the country's third Peace Recovery and Development Programme (PRDP3) for Northern Uganda.

- U-Report is also influencing high-level dialogues. For example, during a 2015 meeting between the Director General of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and Uganda's First Lady, U-Report poll results were used to provide evidence of the progress the government was making towards the commitments of the 2015 Girl Summit in London, United Kingdom.

- U-Report Uganda was one of the 40 winners for 'mobile innovation with a social impact' in the 2015 World Summit Awards in Abu Dhabi.

Expected results (by 2020)

- Citizen feedback via U-Report will be used to influence at least 100 actions by local government to better respond to priority children's needs as expressed by citizens.

- At least 1 million citizens will be registered and engaged on U-Report, with U-Report being leveraged as a tool to operationalize the 3rd Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC) is an international human rights treaty that allows the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to hear complaints from children or their caregivers alleging that a child's rights have been violated.

- At least 100 civil society organizations will be strengthened to use U-Report data to advocate for children's rights at sub-national level.

Learn more about our other innovations