

## **Selfies of Uganda**

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A proposal for the United Nations Development Programme by the 2014 Salzburg Academy on Media & Global Change



## INTRODUCTION

24 million people lack access to adequate water sanitation in Uganda, and 9.2 million are without access to clean, safe water. In Uganda, women are responsible for providing their families with water, so much of their daily lives is spent fetching it. Our goal is to promote awareness about the water situation in rural areas and the role women are playing in it in order to encourage those in urban Uganda to mobilize in assisting NGOs, who are already making efforts to improve the water infrastructure in rural areas. The campaign will share *selfies* and stories of women from rural areas as a call to action for urban Ugandans.

## PART I: FRAMING THE PROBLEM

**Country:** Uganda

**Issue:** Ugandan women are responsible for providing their families with water, food, and wood. They make from two to three trips each day to fetch water for house labor, each of which takes three to six hours, walking. The lack of water infrastructure in the country affects the female population most immediately, causing them to miss school or making it impossible for them to participate in other economic activities, threatening women's safety, health, and individual growth. This is reinforced by the long-set gender stereotypes in Uganda, which typically hold women to a lesser degree than men.

Though there are many international efforts to improve water infrastructure and sanitation (UNICEF, World Bank, and several NGOs), Uganda's score in the Environmental Performance Index is 19.18 points out of 100, placing it as one of the countries that need more improvement. There is a lack of local concern within the urban population of Uganda, focusing only on their own services improvement. Studies show that if the social gap continues to increase between the rural and urban areas of Uganda, the ultra-poor will be the most affected. Improving conditions for rural women and access to a clean water supply are strongly linked to promoting awareness about the water situation in urban areas.

### Rationale:

Of the 34 million people in Uganda, 24 million lack access to adequate water sanitation and 9.2 million are without safe access to water sources. As a result over 12,000 children die every year from diarrhea (WaterAid). There's been a growth in access to drinkable water over the last decade, but access to clean water remains relatively the same. This context makes handling the water system, maintaining wells and collecting water, a task for women subjected to a nationwide stereotype of submissive caretakers (African Political Systems).

Our solution targets the urban populous of Uganda, where the status of women has improved after a wave of women's rights protests in the 1980s. Selfies of Uganda targets women from 16

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to 40 years old – the demographic that we feel will most likely empathize with rural Ugandan women. After its initial phases, Selfies of Uganda will grow to encompass other demographics within the local and international audiences.

As of 2012, an estimated 4.9 million people in Uganda regularly use the Internet, the majority living in urban areas (where 18.8% of Ugandans live). Approximately 1 in every 35 people own a smartphone, therefore making a computer-based solution is likely to reach a broader audience. By targeting urban Ugandan women with images of their rural counterparts, women will be able to empathize with the similar roles other women play within their families; besides, part of them come from rural areas, so they will be able to relate on a deeper level.

Facebook has 380,000 urban Ugandan women in the aforementioned age range, and if men are included we can see a penetration of 84.1% within the urban population, providing a great chance to expand our demographic. Selfies of Uganda will be promoted exclusively in the country during its initial phases. And even though there are more males on Facebook, we'll address a target that's more likely to share the content and engage action. Concerning the lack of connectivity in rural Uganda, our solution does not require the local women – who will be managing the “selfie” cameras – to have internet.

## PART II: THE SOLUTION

### Our solution:

The Selfies of Uganda campaign will enable the rural women of Uganda to share images from their daily lives in order to create awareness in a positive way about how essential water is and the growing need for attention to water infrastructure and sanitation. After training them to use the cameras and selfie sticks, they will document their routines and travels to fetch water, and show urban Ugandans their side of the story through the selfie. Volunteers from the NGOs working parallel with us will pick up these images, create a list of basic questions to ask the women portrayed, write less than a paragraph of their story, and post them to the campaign's Facebook page. These images will then be shared and promoted so that urban Ugandan women will be able to know the name, face, and particular story of their rural compatriots. We're aiming to create a personal bond that will increase the sensibility of urban population towards rural issues and the need for urban support. With each selfie there will be a short story of the woman pictured and a call for action. We will be guiding the audience to NGOs that are already working on rural areas and are in need of human and financial resources.

We did a selection of the towns we want to work with to make Selfies of Uganda a reality: Luweero, Amuria, and Soroti. These places were chosen based on the population of the area, the need for help, and their distance to urban areas where volunteers can upload the pictures. The distance is important so that we can have a regular update of the Facebook page and also to

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reduce transportation costs. Aside from that, we are using a social trend, selfies, as a hook to our target.

### Implementation:

There are similar photography projects and campaigns such as Humans of New York and Portraits of Boston. Outside of Facebook is Live Love Beirut, which focuses on sharing positive images of Beirut, and it's an ongoing project that started on Instagram. The *selfie* phenomenon has expanded throughout the world. It was dubbed the word of the year by Oxford Dictionary in November 2013 and the trend doesn't seem to decrease. From the First Lady of the USA to the Pope, no one loses the opportunity of joining a selfie. Over one million selfies are taken each day, and 48% of them are shared through Facebook. As for advertising campaigns based on the *selfie* phenomenon; one of the most remarkable is *Cape Times* "*Selfies*," in which a South African newspaper remade iconic photographs into selfies with the caption: "You can't get any closer to the news. The Cape Times. Know all about it". Selfies of Uganda will use this form of image and story-sharing to encourage urban Ugandans to make it possible for rural Ugandan women's stories to travel and expand, but also to take action in the solution by linking them to charities and NGOs that are working to solve the issue.

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On the first days, we are going to promote the page on Facebook and we are going to send invitations to join the page through volunteers, organizations, etc. Also, the NGOs and local charities are going to advertise Selfies of Uganda on their web pages and other platforms, reducing our initial investment into the purchase of easy-to-use cameras (either film or digital) and *selfie* sticks (extension of arm to take a wider photo). Facebook promotion costs (to boost the Facebook page reach) in Uganda are adaptable to whichever budgets we have.

It will take a few months to get the project set up to begin, including finding people to train rural Ugandans with using the cameras and sticks to take a *selfie*. However, once the Ugandans are trained, the project will be relatively easy to maintain and continue. Volunteers will contribute their time to: collect cameras, ask the rural Ugandan women taking the selfies three standard questions (that will change every two months), sort the pictures, writing brief story vignettes about the people in the selfie, and posting it on Facebook. It is easy to track Facebook page outreach; including how many people are reached through organic and paid means.