

Labour agencies need to be streamlined

Due to the high unemployment rate in Uganda, especially among the youth, many have resorted to seeking jobs abroad. This has given rise to numerous labour agencies. The Uganda Association for External Recruitment Agencies (UAERA) was set up. Reagan Ssempiija spoke

to the chairperson of the association, Andrew Tumwine Kameraho about their mandate and the external labour industry

Q Give us a brief background of UAERA Uganda Association

for External Recruitment Agencies (UAERA) started in 2013 with 12 member agencies. Our main objectives in the beginning was to unite and offer a common platform to organisations across the country to share information that will promote self-employment abroad. We also wanted to ensure advocacy for our interests as

an association in the labour sector. Today, we have 147 members.

What exactly does the organisation do?
We continuously engage with our members to ensure that they do the right things as stipulated by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social affairs. We also act

as an intermediary between the member agencies and the labour ministry so the interests of the agencies are given priority

How much foreign exchange does external labour bring into Uganda annually?

Currently, there are over 150,000 Ugandans working in the Middle East and some other countries. With this number, from the Middle East alone, we record remittances of up to \$500m annually and the global figure shoots up to \$1.4b.

What jobs are available for Ugandans abroad?

Most of the jobs available in the Middle East countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, catering jobs, like housekeeping, restaurant jobs, IT experts, factory workers, drivers, farm workers among others.

However, countries like Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia of also lately started taking up some Ugandans, but strictly for military work.

How is your organisation fighting fraudsters in the business?

Once we get a case of a fraudster in our office, the first thing is to report the case to the Anti Human Trafficking Unit, which is then taken up by the Police. We do whistle blowing because we do not have the mandate to enforce the prosecution of any fraudster.

How can one tell a genuine company from a fake one?

A genuine agency should have its operation on display in the office. Secondly, the location of the agency is also important because fake companies like to operate in

obscure areas.

In case of grievances, where can one go to seek redress and help for instance if they are duped by fake players in the industry?

First of all, if the agency that a client has a grievance with is a member then we as an association will intervene and make sure the issue is resolved amicably, but if the agency is not a member of UAERA, then that becomes a Police case directly and we handle that as such

As an organisation, have you met any challenges and how do you mitigate them?

Our biggest challenge is with human traffickers who tarnish the name of our member agencies.

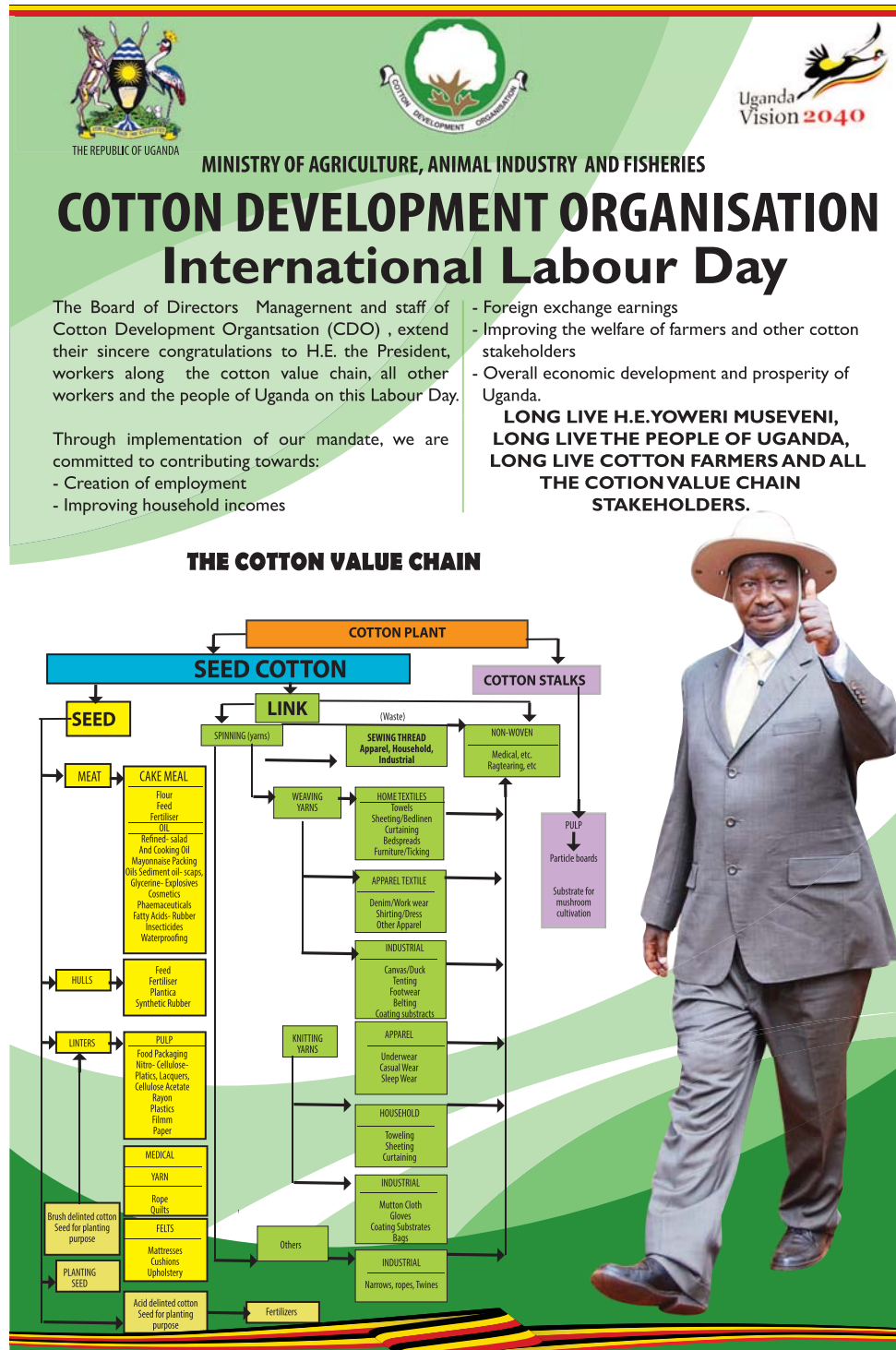
Many Ugandans then think that most labour agencies only traffic people illegally, which is bad for business.

We also face a challenge of poverty among many Ugandans, which disables them from affording the fees required to travel abroad.

How are you handling the issue of Ugandans who are mistreated abroad, yet they went to work?

As an organisation, we have put in place mechanisms to protect everyone that goes abroad to work including the men. Most of the submissions are done online, which leaves us with the contact information so that we can track and follow up if any such issue arises.

However, those that do not go through the registered agencies are bound to face challenges, like mistreatment by the employer.



Andrew Tumwine Kameraho