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Ugandan Refugee Turned Entrepreneur Saves Lives With Recycled Soap

Renowned Ugandan refugee turned entrepreneur, human rights activist and CNN Hero, Dr. Derreck Kayongo, will be returning to Africa this year to share his inspiring story and recipe for success at the annual SAPICS Conference in Cape Town.

Organisers of Africa's leading event for supply chain professionals have announced that they are delighted to have confirmed Kayongo's participation in the 40th annual SAPICS Conference, which takes place from 10 to 13 June.

After fleeing civil war torn Uganda in 1979, Kayongo became a refugee in Kenya. He later immigrated to America to attend university, and it was on his first day in the country that he was inspired to start an organisation that has, since 2009, contributed to a remarkable 30% reduction in child deaths globally.

Kayongo explains the beginning of his journey from refugee to CNN Hero: *"I was preparing to take a shower in my hotel when I discovered the many different kinds of soap in the room. There was hand soap, face soap, body soap and shampoo. I had never seen so much soap for one person!"*

After a few days, Kayongo began to wonder what happened to the partially used soap that disappeared from his room each day. *"I was shocked to discover that it was just thrown away."* Motivated by his experiences as a refugee in Kenya, and knowing that in-crisis communities are often without basic necessities, including soap, Kayongo eventually created a life-changing international aid organisation called *"Global Soap Project"*. The non-profit organisation collects discarded soap from hotels, sanitises and reprocesses it, and distributes it to vulnerable populations worldwide. This simple idea is making a significant contribution to the fight against hygiene related diseases, which are the number one killers of children in many at-risk communities.

“Lack of proper hygiene claims more than 1.8 million lives every year, but I discovered that 800 million bars of soap a year are thrown away. That is 2.6 million bars of soap every single day,” says Kayongo.

Global Soap has given millions of bars of soap to refugees and people affected by natural disasters like the earthquakes in Haiti and Nepal. Kayongo's original vision for the organisation was also to include micro-loans and training for soap makers in communities around the world, and this is now underway.

Global Soap recently joined forces with *“Clean the World”*, to add even more impetus to the two organisations' humanitarian efforts. Jointly, they are now active in more than 90 countries. *“Through this partnership, even more trash will be diverted from landfills, more soap can be recycled and distributed, more vulnerable people can be reached, and there is even greater focus on the sustainable impact of this life-saving mission,”* Kayongo enthuses. His visionary soap recycling operation is flying high and making a real difference in millions of lives.

Today Kayongo sits on the board of the soap project, but no longer runs the non-profit organisation.

Among the honours that have been bestowed on Kayongo is that of CNN Hero. In 2011, he was one of the individuals recognised by CNN for an extraordinary contribution to humanitarian aid and for making a difference in their communities. The city of Atlanta in the USA has designated May 5 as annual Global Soap Project Day.

In addition to his work with Global Soap and his humanitarian efforts, Kayongo is the Chief Executive Officer for the National Centre for Civil and Human Rights. Located in Atlanta, the centre is involved in a wide range of human rights issues. It is reported that during his first tour of the centre, Kayongo suddenly froze when faced with a life-size image of Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. This was whose reign of terror he and his family fled when they became refugees in Kenya. The 6-foot cutout of Amin is part of the *“Wall of Shame”*, a rogues' gallery of human rights violators that is part of one of the exhibits at the centre. Kayongo was just 10 years old when his family was

rounded up with others from his Ugandan village and forced to watch as neighbours were randomly selected and killed by a firing squad under the military rule of Amin.

In 2014, Kayongo joined the elite TED TALK speakers in Charleston, and he travels the world sharing his knowledge and experiences.

"I am giving a voice to the voiceless, since many people affected by displacement and civil war never have a chance to be heard," states Kayongo, who says that he is thrilled to be able to bring his story back to Africa through the platform provided by leading supply chain and operations management association SAPICS.

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ABOUT SAPICS: <http://www.sapics.org>

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SAPICS builds operations management excellence in individuals and enterprises through superior education and training, internationally recognised certifications, comprehensive resources and a country-wide network of accomplished industry professionals. This network is ever expanding and now includes associates in other African countries. SAPICS is proud to represent APICS (the global end-to-end supply chain association) as its exclusive premier channel partner in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Established 40 years ago, the annual SAPICS Conference is the leading event in Africa for supply chain professionals. The 2018 SAPICS Conference takes place in Cape Town, from 10 to 13 June.