



PLATFORM FOR LABOUR ACTION

**PROTECTING CHILDHOOD, BUILDING
FUTURES: THE PLA JOURNEY AGAINST
CHILD LABOUR IN UGANDA
APRIL 2021 THROUGH DECEMBER 2023**



IMPACT BRIEF

www.pla-uganda.org





INTRODUCTION

Between April 2021 and December 2023, the Eradicating Child Labour in Uganda project funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation aimed to eliminate child labour and exploitation in targeted districts by of Iganga, Kaliro, Bugiri, Kampala Metropolitan area and Wakiso districts raising community awareness, strengthening social protection, and promoting compliance with child labour laws. The initiative focused on five core areas: educating communities on child rights, supporting local governments to enforce child protection ordinances, equipping families with livelihood and psychosocial skills to reduce economic vulnerability, enrolling former child labourers in school or vocational training and linking them to decent jobs, and engaging private sector actors to certify workplaces as child-labour-free through inspections and compliance measures.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Child labour robs children of their education, health, and future opportunities. In Uganda, economic hardship and weak enforcement of laws often push children into exploitative work. This project addressed root causes by empowering families economically, reintegrating children into education, and creating safer workplaces. By reducing child labour from 76.3% to 25% among surveyed households, the initiative demonstrates that community-driven solutions can break cycles of poverty and exploitation, ensuring children grow up safe, educated, and hopeful.

IMPACT CHILDREN REACHED

Category	Total	Girls	Boys	Children with Disabilities
Agents of Change (cumulative)	217	126	91	9 (6 girls, 3 boys)
School/Vocational Enrollment (reported)	1,001*	832*	521*	23 (10 girls, 13 boys)

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Psychosocial Counselling	203	161	42	Not specified
Children Reached in Workplace Inspections	25	4	21	Not specified

HOUSEHOLDS REACHED /FAMILY HEADS OF FORMER CHILD LABOURERS, CHILDREN VULNERABLE TO THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR (ACCESSING ENTREPRENEURSHIP/BUSINESS SKILLS

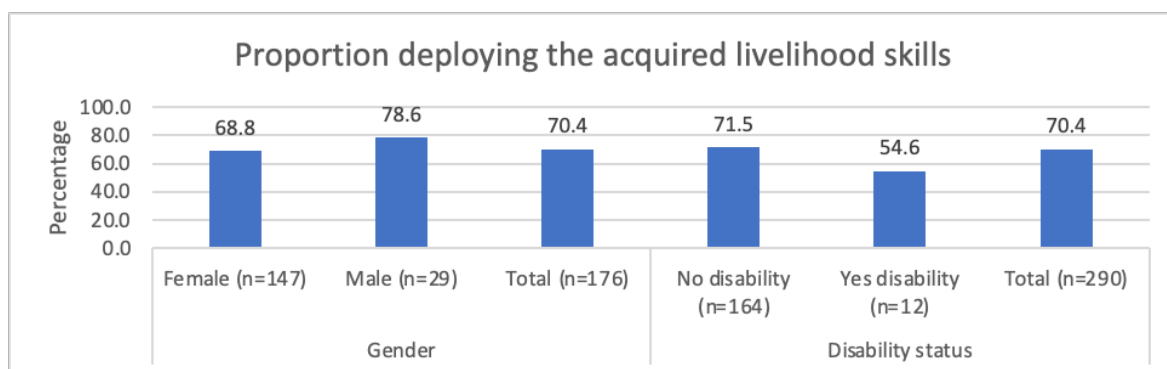
Description	Female	Male	Persons With Disability	Total
Number of family heads of former child labourers, children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour (disaggregated by gender and disability) accessing entrepreneurship/ business skills	2645	1845	32	4490
Family heads of former child labourers, children vulnerable to the worst forms of labour improved incomes	1503	638	Not captured	2145

Household heads were equipped with hands on skills for economic sustainability in liquid soap and bar soap making and confectionaries, This was achieved through group savings and one on one sessions.

HOUSEHOLDS FAMILY HEADS OF FORMER CHILD LABOURERS, CHILDREN VULNERABLE TO THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR AND CHILDREN IMPROVING INCOMES

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The key outcome was family heads of former child labourers, children vulnerable to the worst forms of labour improved incomes. According to the end evaluation it was ascertained that 70.4% (n=176) with variations across gender and disability self-reported deploying the entrepreneurship and livelihood skills acquired as seen in the graph below;



1001 children and young people previous child labour victims or children vulnerable to child labour – were identified and enrolled in government aided primary schools or vocational training according to their age, needs and situation. 600 children aged 14 -17 years were enrolled in vocational training and while 401 were provided with scholastic materials and other school requirements to enable them stay and complete their basic primary education. At project end, **68.3%** of the vocational trainees were in gainful employment related to their skilling, while others continue to seek full time work. While the children support with school requirements remained school.



Children project beneficiaries from St James Bbina primary school in Kampala Nakawa division with their scholastic materials and sanitary pads.



Children project beneficiaries from Noble care primary school that were supported with scholastic materials

1505 children and family members (985 F, 520 M, 30 PWD) accessed psychological counselling to support their reintegration into society alongside their vocational training or education and strengthened the parent's understanding of the need to address child labour. The counselling helped the children and trainees to cope with the new school environments, manage expectations and support their parent/caregiver's participation in the education or training cycle. Parents/caregivers were counseled to avoid involving their children in work and to retain their children in school. Due to the poverty faced by these families, the counselling proved to be an important component to help them navigate challenges which otherwise could lead to relapse into child labour. The project team reported that retention in training had been higher in this project than in previous actions, due to this element: in all only 5 supported children dropped out.

We reached 10,347 (7,411 male and 2936 female) vulnerable people across the project districts with livelihood and entrepreneurship skills such as liquid soap-making, bar bar soap-making, bakery, crafts and snack making to facilitate and increase their resilience in the face of



recruitment of children into child labour practices. The Final evaluation survey found that a total of 70.4% of those trained were currently deploying the entrepreneurship and livelihood skills acquired. 78.7% of these beneficiaries attested to utilizing the livelihood capacities acquired to take/keep children in school, and to provide for the family economically without requiring the children to complement family income.

3,972 households by close of the project were actively taking positive actions to reduce and or stop reliance and use of children in child labour activities. The final evaluation report of the project, ascertained that many parents/caregivers were taking positive steps to withdraw their children from child labour. Actions included, providing their children with basic needs, keeping their children in school and encouraging them to study hard. Other households had reported incidences of child labour to the police and local authorities, particularly for dangerous and exploitative forms of work.

VOICE OF CHANGE AND EMPOWERMENT

Esther Birungi - "Member of parents group"



Birungi Esther is a mother of 6 children married to a casual worker (digging on rice plantations); she is a member of Gemakumwiino parents saving group that started in August 2022 in Bugiri district. Her daughter Bridget, who sat for her Primary Leaving Examinations in 2022 was not intending to continue her schooling due to limited resources. Esther shares that she borrowed Ugx. 200,000 UGX from her group and she used this to start a vegetable and charcoal stall in Busowa Town Area. She is now progressing with her business and it is providing a good income. Esther is very grateful for the support from PLA that enabled her to gain entrepreneurship skill and to get a loan to start a business. She feels this has changed her life because she is able to support her family and children needs and to pay school fees of Ugx. 150,000/= for Bridget to continue to secondary school.

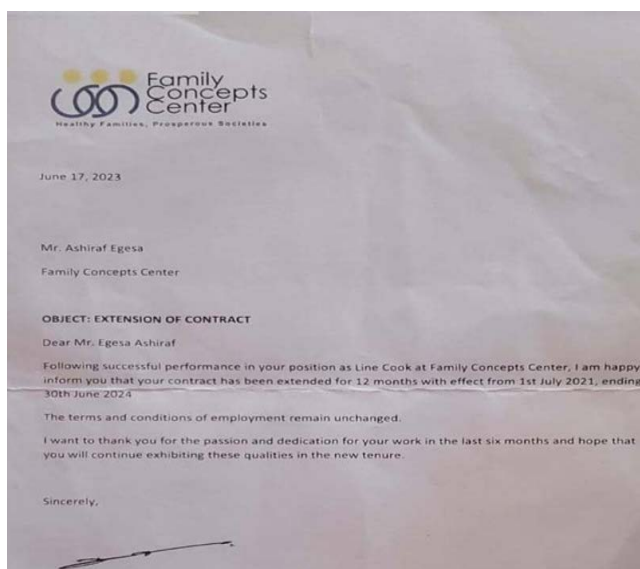
Ashraf Egesa's inspiring journey - "From pottery to culinary success"



At the tender age of 17, Ashraf found himself trapped in the arduous world of pottery, earning Ugx 3,000 a day in Nakavule, Iganga district. He faced numerous challenges and health complications from carrying heavy building materials. Despite the hardships he endured, Ashraf never lost hope. *"I dreamt of a better future, one where I could escape the cycle of poverty and fulfill my true potential. On the day a PLA community champion and the local council chairperson reached out to me and told me about the work of PLA and that they were looking for children that working in dangerous work to support them leave such work, I remember I cried in front of them. I could not believe that at last, I would get the opportunity to study and get a skill. To be honest I was really tired of working on construction sites because I do not have a lot of energy and I was earning very little. I immediately accepted and even told them that I was not going back to work the next day. (at this point smiles while reflectively shaking his head). Finally when all the processes were completed, I was taken and enrolled at the Nile Vocational Training Institute in Jinja. I was happy. Very happy. It was my first time in Jinja but also be in a boarding section. I was very happy. While at the Institute, I decided to take on the catering course. I loved this course because I could always see such people working and also I believed that I would not fail to get a job. My skilling was very smooth with all the support and encouragement from PLA teams- I tell you those Aunties are like mothers, they used to speak to us and really if you are serious you focus. We also had very good and experienced instructors and I was able to master the art of cooking, honing my techniques and developing an exquisite palate. When we completed skilling, the organisation again placed us for industrial training. I identified this place "Concepts Cafe " and the program supported me to undertake my work place training. This period provided an opportunity to showcase my skills and passion but also I gained professionalism and handling clients.*

When I was accepted to do my internship training, I told myself, I am going to work very hard so that I am retained and this is what happened exactly. I landed my first formal employment as a chef at Concepts Café in Iganga, earning a respectable monthly salary of Ugx 200,000 with allowances and benefits such as free housing, meals and medical insurance in case I injure myself at work. Now I have a contract on the left, until 2024 but I am aspiring to open my own culinary business within the next two

years so that I can also train and create job opportunities for others and continue to make a positive impact in my community.



Kyozira Sharon's Journey - "From child labour to independent tailor, there is a time for everything and to never lose faith"



Sharon hails from Bwole Sub County, Bugiri district and she is currently 17 years old. She found herself caught in the arduous cycle of washing clothes for a payment of Ugx 3,000 shillings after losing all her parents at an early age. She lives with her aunt and five younger cousins and life was a constant struggle leading to her early dropout of school. This forced her to start looking for odd jobs on the village that included domestic work, digging for community members on rice gardens but at very minimal pay.-she recalls.

"My Life totally changed from the day the area chairperson and a PLA community person visited my aunt's home. The chairperson knew me very well and my struggles. It was then that I was selected among the children to benefit under this program. I choose a tailoring course and I was taken to Pioneer Technical Institute in Iganga together with some of other children. While there, I learnt a lot about tailoring especially creative tailoring for example making bags which I never knew that it was part of tailoring. When I completed, my Aunt was kind enough to buy me a tailoring machine and she even got for me a place in town where to work from. I can tell you that I am extremely happy. My weekly sales range between Ugx 30,000 to Ugx 50,000 shillings which is really good money. I am currently even supporting my Aunt to pay school fees for some of my cousins."

Proud of her accomplishments, Sharon's heart turned towards helping others. She trained two of her friends in tailoring, empowering them to follow a similar path. Another friend pursued a career in hairdressing, inspired by Sharon's journey. Sharon's dreams are expanding further as she aspires to open her own workshop, showcasing her skills and serving the community. She pledged to continue training others who show passion for learning. With unwavering hope and resilience, Sharon reminded everyone that there is a time for everything and to never lose faith.



Lubwama Shafic - "I am earning decently from the skill I attained, thanks to PLA"



Photo of Shafic taken while at his place of work working on the clients.

Shafic Lubwama turned 18 years of age last December 2022. At the time of his identification in 2021, he was 17 years of age working at construction sites as a porter. With the support of the project, he was enrolled at Nile vocational institute Jinja for a six month course in hair dressing, a skill he always wanted to do. Following completion of the skilling period, he was enrolled for internship for a period of 3 months after which he was retained by the employer because he was good at what he does and also behaved well. He shared that life has completely changed now since depending on the day clients they have worked on he gets between 15000- and 20000shillings a day and collectively monthly he gets UGX. 600,000/=and on top of that he continues to learn new hairstyles from the employer. *'My dream now is to open up a saloon of my own very soon because my personal clients have increased in number. I know how to cost the business and with new skills I have acquired I am good to go. I would not be here today if not was not for PLA. This organisation is really impacting the lives of people like who have no support because I saw so many children when I was at Nile vocation that the organisation was supporting and I am in contact with some of them and they are doing well. So PLA please continue with this supporting and also organize us so that we can also contribute to your work'.*

Mirembe Patricia shares her story - "I aspire to be a hotel and a saloon owner"



Mirembe Patricia Joy found herself at risk of being trapped in the cycle of child labor. She was burdened with domestic chores, and farm work, struggling to make ends meet for herself and her family. Living with her mother and younger sisters, Mirembe shouldered the responsibility of helping her relatives care for her siblings, two of whom were attending school. Life was incredibly challenging for Mirembe and her family. Food was scarce, and they often went without proper meals. Her mother, working as a farmer, could barely provide for their basic needs. The inability to afford school fees meant Mirembe was deprived of an education dropping out of school in senior one.

'But I tell you, my life took a good turn. That day, I was returning from working in the rice plantation where I had been paid Ugx. 6000 and I was happy, it was then that I met my Uncle. He told me he was looking for me and my mum whole day but we were no where to be found. He told me that the chairperson and another person from PLA had visited our home but we were not there and the chairperson had reached out to him so that he locates us. He told me to stay home the following the day because the team had promised to come back. I did as I was told and indeed the team



came home and registered me. When I was asked what course I wanted to take on, I told them 'I aspire to be a hotel and a saloon owner'. I was then asked to pick one of them and I picked Hotel management. Together with other children, were taken to Pioneer Technical Institute in Iganga. I committed to my course catering and Hotel Management because I knew it was the change I had to change my path. This commitment made me to perform very well in class and the instructor noticed my good work and commitment. Immediately after skilling, they recommended me to go and do my internship training here at Ridar Hotel. When I informed PLA of my place of internship, they were equally happy for me and the organisation supported me. I also didn't disappoint, I worked hard and showcased my skills and behold, even before the end of the internship, an opening for waiters came and my supervisor told me to apply and I was given the job. Oh, the day I signed my contract of employment, I felt like heaven was on earth and to-date I am still working here. I paid well,, the salary supports me and my family back in Bugiri. I saving to upgrade by papers. I just want to say, A big thank you to PLA. Sincerely, that organisation is genuine in what ever it does. Thank you!"

Kubwene Lukman - "From rice fields to carpentry success"



From the village of Kakongoka Bukona in Iganga district, Kubwene Lukman (16yr) used to plant rice and attending to cattle. Lukman should have been sitting behind a school desk, but poverty held him captive, forcing him into a cycle of backbreaking labor for Ugx 2,000 a day. Lukman currently lives with his parents and two younger siblings, but his life far different and credits PLA, an organisation He named "**Guardian angle**"

"For me what I can say in summary is that PLA is my Guardian angle. That's it. The support that organization gave to acquire a skill from which I currently earn comfortably, I will forever be grateful. I did carpentry and Joinery at Nile Vocational Training Institute in Jinja. The carpentry program not only equipped me with practical knowledge but also instilled in me a sense of purpose and pride because I naturally love wood work.

When I completed the training, I looked for a workshop where I could continue perfecting my skill and earn and that's when I was employed here. I earn a respectable income of Ugx 6,000 to Ugx 7,000 a day and on a good day, I even earn more that. Lukman has since opened a small grocery shop for his mother, enabling her to contribute to their livelihood. As Lukman crafted meticulously designed tools for the shop, a swell of pride filled his heart. The joy he brought to his family and the community was immeasurable when he was able to make and design for his mother a full set of household chairs and tables. Looking to the future, Lukman dreams of establishing his own workshop, a place where he could further develop his skills and inspire others. He vows to share his knowledge, offering apprenticeships to his siblings and friends, empowering them to break free from the chains of poverty and child labour.



BENEFICIARY QUOTES

"I was born in Kaliro and dropped out of school at 14 due to lack of funds. Through PLA, I trained in building and now earn UGX 20,000 a day. My life has changed—I am no longer bitter, I make right decisions, and I support my relatives. Platform renewed my life." — Male youth, 20 years old

"Before the PLA Child Labour project, I was just waiting for my husband to provide. My children were working for somebody during weekends. The oldest daughter was working as a house help for peanuts. When PLA came, I joined a parents group, learned skills like making snacks, and withdrew my daughter from child labour. She trained in hairdressing and now works in a salon in Wakiso. She earns better, is independent, and her future is bright." — Female caregiver, Wakiso

Mbwaali Scovia, a single mother from Butokolo Village, accessed a small loan through her savings group, started a mandazi business, and later expanded into mobile money services. Her capital grew from UGX 120,000 to UGX 720,000, enabling her to pay school fees for her child and support her parents. This story illustrates how project-supported savings groups and entrepreneurship training empower caregivers to sustain children's education and reduce vulnerability to child labour.

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