

STORIES OF IMPACT

Promising Future for Resilient Children in Uganda



INTRODUCTION

Terre des Hommes Netherlands in partnership with Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL) implemented a project in 2020 and 2021, focusing on protection of children from sexual exploitation in Kampala and Wakiso Districts, Uganda.

The project aimed to reduce sexual exploitation of children through provision of psychosocial support services and economic empowerment to survivors of sexual exploitation; as well as increasing the awareness in their communities about children rights, self-protection and dangers of sexual exploitation of children (SEC).

The stories highlighted in this booklet capture how the life of survivors of sexual exploitation changed as a result of this project. From counselling and psychosocial support, life skills training, medical check ups, advocacy, vocational skills training, and business management skills training, 480 children (215 girls and 165 boys) have been positively impacted by the project and their lives have changed for the better.





Belinda, 16, was sexually exploited when she escaped from her step mother's house to go and live with her friend in Katwe Kinyoro —a place commonly known for harboring street children who engage in sex work. The plight of Belinda pushed her to engage in transactional sex work for survival. She says that in a day, she used to sleep with 4 men and receive between 2 to 2.5 Euros. Belinda was identified by the project team. Following assessment, she received counselling and guidance from the project social worker at Makindye UYDEL Centre. She was provided with psychosocial support and engaged in socio-economic strengthening activities such as vocational skills training, financial literacy, and street business management. Belinda was also engaged in life skills training using the UNODC's Line Up Live Up sports training package. She says sports have been very instrumental in her recovery journey because she felt more at peace during the soccer sessions. She would get back home tired from the sports training, so she had no time left to engage in risky behaviours. Due to her excellence in soccer, she was invited to participate in the third edition of the Kampala girls football league organised by Soccer Without Borders. Belinda says that she stopped consuming alcohol because now she knows it is not good for her health. She has also chosen to abstain from sex out of fear of contracting HIV/AIDs and other infections. Generally, there has been significant improvement in her behaviour; she no longer engages in fights and is more respectful to other people in her community.

When Belinda graduated in December 2021, she received a startup kit which she used to open up a bakery stall where she sells samosas in her community. On average she makes a profit of 1.26 Euros per day. She uses part of the profit to cater for her basic needs and saves the rest to be able to generate more capital to expand the business. She wants to be able to sell more samosas and add other products like juice to be able to make more profit. She hopes that she will be able to help other street children in Katwe Kinyoro by providing them with employment.





Cathy is an 18 year old teen mom who lives with her biological mother in Makindye division. Before participating in this project, Cathy was working at a comrade's bar in Kansanga as a waitress —earning 37.94 Euros per month. She washed clothes for community members to make ends meet. “When working there, male customers would touch me and this was the hardest issue I faced. I couldn’t complain to my boss because I feared losing my job. So I endured the situation because I wanted the job,” Cathy stated. One day, she met a customer who started showering her with gifts. He made her believe he was in love with her and wanted to take care of her. During the first wave of COVID -19, she moved in with him, got her pregnant and abandoned her. He denied her basic needs, including food, and he would get violent and beat her severely. This caused her to run away and move back in with her mother. It is at that point that she was recommended to be enrolled at UYDEL Makindye Centre and undergo rehabilitation. She was supported with food rations and since it was a COVID-19 era, this food supported her a lot with her family. “During the COVID-19 pandemic, we didn’t have food at home and this affected my intake of ARVs because I had no food. When UYDEL gave us food, I resumed taking my ARVs. I am so grateful for UYDEL and our partner TdH NL for the support,” Cathy said. he also received counselling and guidance from the social workers and during the life skills training. Cathy mentioned that, “We were able to learn how to make good life informed decisions and this helped me a lot. The social worker always encouraged me to take my ARVs and this supported me because sometimes when I felt like not taking the drugs and recalled the counselling and guidance I got from the social worker, I would rush to get my drugs and take them.”

Being one of the most vulnerable families, Cathy’s household was supported with funds worth 151.75 Euros which they used to start up a family income generating activity —selling charcoal. The business is run by her mother and through the business, she was able to raise money for rent both at home and at the place of work, and also cater for their other basic needs. She says the business has generally improved the wellbeing of everyone at home. She says during the pandemic, they were at risk of becoming homeless due to delayed rent payments but they were able to raise the rent through the business.

In addition to that, Cathy started up a chips making business in Nsereko zone which she operates along the Lukuli road in the afternoons. She earns 7.58 Euros every day and saves the money to be able to open up a restaurant where other local dishes are served. She is motivated to work on her small business. Her future plan is to build a successful restaurant business and build a house for her mother. Cathy continues to receive support and follow up from the social worker and the Child Protection Champion to ensure that she adheres to the ARVS and maintains a healthy lifestyle.





Teopista, 15, stays with her biological mother in a single roomed house in the slums of Katwe. She was influenced by peers to drop out of school in primary four to become a sex worker in a bar in Nateete. She was forced to sleep with more than five men in a single night, getting between 1.31 to 2.61 Euros from each man. She would take a lot of alcohol to build up courage and cope with her situation. During the COVID-19 lockdown, when all bars were closed, she hawked mangoes from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm and earned approximately 1.31 Euros every evening. Her friends later discovered lodges that were still operating at that time, where they went and resumed commercial sex work. At this point, Teopista was staying with her friends because her mother had given up on her.

In August 2021, she was identified by the project social worker in Katwe. She was thoroughly screened and assessed after which she was enrolled in the bakery class where she learnt to bake snacks such as samosas, daddies, doughnuts and half cakes among others. She was rehabilitated, equipped with life skills, business skills and so much more. “I used to disrespect my mother, sometimes I would not sleep home because I had friends who used to encourage me to spend the whole night in bars. I gave my mum a headache and she one time reached an extent of giving up on me. But when I came to UYDEL, the social worker sat with me and guided me. I joined the football group at the centre which helped me to learn skills of anger management and teamwork. I am a better person today because of it.”

Upon graduation, Teopista received a bakery start up kit which she used to set up a samosa and fried cassava business. She saved up the profits worth 70.5 Euros, which she used to start up another business. She sold more profitable items like charcoal, bananas, tomatoes, onions and sugarcane among others. Teopista says sports has helped her to reform and she was very happy to participate in the 3rd edition of the Kampala Girl's League. She is more responsible now and works hard to raise school fees for 3 younger siblings to make sure that they stay in school and do not have similar experiences like her. She says saving has really helped her cater for her basic needs and those of her family.





Chris, 17, grew up with his biological mother in the village of Muyenga. His father was a security guard who abandoned the family after being transferred to Koboko. Chris was one year old by then. Life became hard for him and his mother, who pursued multiple casual jobs to support the family. This was worsened by the high cost of living, which pushed them to relocate to Kirinya where they went through hardship for 10 years. Unfortunately, Chris's four siblings succumbed to an illness, which was a result of poor living conditions, lack of access to basic needs and proper medication. Even though his mother worked for long hours, her earnings were insufficient to cater for quality health care. Later in 2019, his mother heard about free land that was being given out by the government of Uganda to vulnerable citizens/families. She applied and received a small piece of land in a swamp in Busega, where they set up a small house made from timber and iron sheets. They have lived here for a period of 4 years so far. Chris dropped out of school at secondary level due to financial constraints. He became a victim of child exploitation as a result of spending a lot of time alone. He was lured by his friends into sexual activities, substance abuse and using vulgar language. In March 2021, he was identified during the peer led community awareness engagement session on sexual exploitation and abuse of children that was conducted near one of the bars in Kibumbiro by UYDEL's peer educators. Thereafter, he was referred to the UYDEL Nateete Youth Centre where he was screened, assessed by the social worker and later enrolled for a bakery class.

Before participating in the project, Chris felt depressed with no hope of a brighter future. He had lost self-esteem and lacked confidence in himself. During the rehabilitation period, the social worker engaged him in several activities to help improve his personality and effect change in his life. Some of these activities included; counselling and psychosocial support through safe play at the safe space, behavioral change communications, peer led discussions on sexual reproductive health and substance use, life skills training like the street-smart modules, UNODC's Line Up Live Up Program, HIV Testing and Counseling, participation in advocacy, vocational skills trainings, and business management skills trainings.



chris' family was identified as one of the most vulnerable families and was supported with an income-generating activity to help prevent re-exploitation of the child. He received funds worth 151 Euros which he used together with his mother to open up a grocery stall in their neighborhood, where they also sell charcoal. The stall is solely run by the mother now as Chris found another job to supplement income from the grocery business. He is employed as a sales person at a shoe business in Kampala town. He wakes up early in the morning and helps his mother to organise the grocery stall and later sets off for work in town.

Chris is now busy and he has made good friends while at UYDEL drop-in center who enabled him to stay away from bad behaviors that he used to engage in before. His self-esteem and confidence levels have also greatly improved. He has become more resilient in the face of challenges and believes in himself. He is also happy that his nutrition status and health have improved greatly since they are able to afford three meals a day unlike previously when they used to have one meal and sometimes sleep on an empty stomach. He is proud of being able to provide for his basic needs and support his mother at home. He is currently living a happy and safer life. His plan is to buy his mother a nice piece of land and construct a home for her. He dreams of owning a big shop in Kampala and selling trendy shoes for both men and women.





Kulwana, 17, stays with her mother and seven siblings. She is a paternal orphan who grew up without her father. Her mother has been the sole breadwinner since childhood. Kulwana's mother has been running a restaurant in the Nateete Taxi Park since 2018. However, in 2020 her business was affected due to COVID-19 and this negatively impacted the family's well being. Kulwana became a victim of child exploitation while working as a waitress. The job exposed her to sexual exploitation as she was convinced that it was an easier way to obtain money for basic needs and supplies that her mother was unable to provide for her. She had sex with multiple partners in exchange for money in order to provide for her daily needs. It all started when Kulwana dropped out of school due to financial constraints. She started working with her mother at the restaurant where she helped serve food to the customers, who convinced her to engage in sexual acts in exchange for money. She would get at least 2.5 Euros on a daily basis. This continued for one and half years, until she was identified by the project staff and offered rehabilitation.

Before participating in the project, she used to feel bad about her situation. Kulwana was struggling to provide for her personal needs and using the wrong ways to obtain money. She felt worthless. She was identified by the project staff in April 2020. She was assessed and recruited by a social worker who later enrolled her for bakery class at Nateete Youth Centre. She was also provided with Vocational skills, psychosocial support, life skills, business skills, counseling, HIV Testing and Counseling, sexual reproductive health services and behavioral change communications.



Kulwana now bakes the food and leaves them at her mother's restaurant where it is sold to customers. She has been able to go back to school and the money generated from the restaurant helps her to access some of the school requirements and transport. She dreams of pursuing a career in social work. Kulwana is economically empowered and no longer engages in transactional sex. Her self-esteem and confidence has improved, she makes more informed decisions about her life with the help of the knowledge obtained from this project and this in turn has improved her mental wellbeing. Her nutrition status and health has greatly improved and she has become resilient. The assistance has been important to her because it opened her eyes to the negative consequences of engaging in transactional sex but also motivated her to make better decisions that will positively affect her life. She feels good and very happy about her current situation because the business has helped her return to school and she believes if all goes well she will be able to pursue her professional career. Kulwana likes watching television and listening to music. She hopes to be a social worker and improve on the wellbeing of the vulnerable children in her community.



Jacinta is a 17-year-old girl who grew up with her two siblings and biological mother. She was abandoned by her father when she was still young. Her mother used to take care of the entire family and also provide for their basic needs. With the COVID-19 outbreak, she stopped going to school because her mother lost her job.

Due to peer influence, Jacinta started engaging in sexual relationships with different boys in her home village. By then, they were staying in the slum areas of Mutundwe in a single roomed house. Her nutrition status was fair —she used to have one to two meals a day. She dropped out of school while in primary seven grade and has a six months old baby. Jacinta became a victim of child exploitation due to peer influence from fellow friends who had multiple partners. She used to feel bad about the situation because she was not attending school.

Luckily, she was identified by the project staff in September 2020. She was assessed and recruited by a social worker who later enrolled her for bakery class at Nateete youth centre. She was provided with the following services; HIV testing and counselling, vocational skills training, psychosocial support, life skills, business skills and behavioural change communication. She was also rehabilitated. She got all the services from Nateete youth centre and in the community during the peer led sessions and community outreaches which were conducted by UYDEL and other health workers from Kitebi Health Centre III.

Jacinta wakes up early in the morning, helps out the mother to do house chores, nurses her 6 months baby then after that, she bakes snacks which sells at her bakery stall. She gained skills in bakery and is no longer engaged in risky behaviours. She is now capable of providing for her basic needs with the support of her mother.

Her self-esteem has improved, as well as her nutritional status has. She is able to provide for her baby and also contribute school fees for her younger sister. She feels good and very happy about her current situation because her business is prospering. She likes watching movies and listening to music. She also wants to become a professional hairdresser in future.



Marvin, 17, was trafficked by his aunt from Masaka District and to Kampala. She promised to take him back to school, but when they reached Kampala, he realised that he had been deceived. At Kampala, he worked as a potter and he was paid 3.79 Euros per day. Due to the heavy workload, he quit the job and started fetching water for people in the community for 0.13 Euros per 20 litres. Sometimes he would also collect scrap metal and make approximately 0.076 Euros per kilogram. Marvin says he would use part of his savings to go to the cinema halls and this is where he was exposed to child pornography. He would watch nude videos of people practicing sex, kissing and as a young boy, he desired to practice what he was watching. He used to move around with groups of boys in the community collecting scrap metal and sometimes community members referred to them as thieves, something that annoyed him because he was just trying to survive.

Marvin was identified by the project social worker, screened, assessed and enrolled under liquid soap making skills training. In September 2021, his family was supported with 151.75 Euros which was used to add more stock to their family business (retail shop). On graduation day, Marvin received a startup kit for liquid soap. He is currently making soap which he packs in small jerry cans and hawks in the community to earn income. He saves 17.7 Euros on a monthly basis and reports that the business has helped to inspire many young people in the community, especially his friends. Many parents have asked him to refer their children to receive training and support. His plan is to become a supplier of liquid soap in the Makindye division and hopes to achieve that through using his monthly savings.





Mark, 17, grew up with both his biological father and mother and three siblings in Masaka Village, where they lived for 15 years and later shifted to Kampala. His parents were peasants with limited capacity to provide for the family. His father decided to move to Kampala to look for work and give his family a better life. Unfortunately, when they reached Kampala there were no jobs available. His father would secure a few jobs but it was never enough. They ended up being homeless. They located a free land in the swamp of Busega where they constructed a one roomed house using timber and iron sheets with a floor made from mud. They slept on the floor as they had no beds. Sadly, his father started consuming alcohol excessively due to frustrations. This was the beginning of the family's misery and suffering. It is then that Mark was pushed to drop out of school in primary six grade.

Mark became a victim of child exploitation because of the limited parental supervision and peer influence. He joined groups of teenagers in the slum who introduced him to substance use. They convinced him that it would make him forget all his problems. They also introduced him to early sexual involvement and he later on started having multiple sex partners. He felt lost and saw himself as a failure in life. Luckily, Mark was later on identified during the peer led session which was conducted in Kibumbiro in March 2021. He was assessed and recruited by one of the project social workers who later enrolled him for bakery class at Nateete youth centre. Mark was engaged in a number of activities which included behavioural change communication, peer to peer led sessions, life skills, street smart training, advocacy, vocational skills, community dialogues, psychosocial support and business skills training.



Mark's family was identified amongst the most vulnerable families, and they were supported with funds worth 151 Euros aimed at uplifting the family out of absolute poverty; and ensuring that children from this family are protected against exploitation and abuse through economic empowerment. The family set up a plastic shoe selling business (crocs) which enabled them to access basic needs and improve their health and nutrition as they are now able to afford three meals a day, unlike before when they would survive on one meal a day.

Mark wakes up early in the morning to fetch water and thereafter goes out to sell shoes in Mengo and Kosovo. He says the business keeps him busy. He is now more focused on improving the wellbeing of his family and he lacks time to engage in risky behaviours.

He likes listening to music and hanging out with friends during his free time. Mark's dream is to become a great businessman in Kampala, set up his own shop and stop hawking shoes on the streets of Kampala. He has a plan of buying his own land where he will construct a well-ventilated house that is not located in slums.





Mugerwa, 17, grew up with both his parents and four siblings in the village of Kalangala. Unfortunately, he dropped out of school at secondary level due to financial constraints. His parents separated and his mother remarried another man then moved to Kampala. He was left behind with his father and other siblings. Their father was a fishmonger. When he left school, he stayed in the village for a period of 8 months after which he moved to Kampala where his mother rented for him a single roomed house in Ndeeba with his elder brother. Given the freedom of staying alone without parental supervision, the boys used this opportunity to gamble, drink alcohol, and have multiple sex partners. Life was difficult and sometimes he found himself struggling to get what to eat. Mugerwa says he had lost hope and always thought he was a failure in life. One day, he was identified during the community dialogue session that was organised by the project team early in April 2021. He was assessed and recruited by a social worker who later enrolled him for bakery class at Nateete youth centre.

Mugerwa was engaged in a number of activities during the rehabilitation process which included behavioural change communications, peer to peer counselling, life skills training, street smart training, advocacy, vocational skills, community dialogues, psychosocial support, and business skills. He was also supported with 151.94 Euros to start up an income generating activity to support his household. The socio-economic strengthening was aimed at reducing the family's vulnerability to poverty, increasing independence and improving their ability to provide for their needs. The family used the money to open up a clothes and shoes business. He now wakes up early in the morning with his sister and goes to town to sell clothes and shoes in a boutique and comes back home in the evening. He is no longer engaged in risky behaviours such as drugs, and sleeping with multiple partners.



His self-esteem has greatly improved as he is now able to talk to customers nicely and market goods to them without shying away. His nutrition and health status have gotten well. He is working and in position to provide for all his basic needs and living a happy life. He says the assistance given to him by UYDEL is important to him because it has saved him from suffering. He is now a responsible person with goals to pursue in life, with a vision to expand his business within a year. Megerwa likes listening to music, dance and drama activities. His dream is to grow and expand his business to an extent that he can support his family and empower fellow youths with the skills he acquired with this project.



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