

Community Driven Support to Orphans Project



STORIES OF CHANGE


**Gweri, Arapai and Tubur, Sub
counties, Soroti District, Uganda**

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From Left:
Ediangu Justine
(Entomologist)
traingn youth
including Odulai

Foreword from the Executive Director

With more than 75 percent of her population below 30 years of age, Uganda has one of the youngest population in the world. Despite this however, a very big majority of the youth are unemployed. This is the background to this project which we are implementing in Soroti District.

Since 2018, Community Integrated Development Initiatives (CIDI) has been in collaboration with Danish Broadcasting Cooperation through Caritas Denmark implementing the “Community Driven Support to Orphans project in the sub-counties of Gweri, Arapai and Tubur of Soroti district, north eastern Uganda.



This project has been implemented to support three youth associations: Awoja Youth Association in Gweri Sub County, Alakaros Youth Integrated Development Association in Arapai Sub County, and Acuna Ajaku Youth Association in Tubur Sub County.

In this publication we share our experiences, key lessons and some of the youth testimonies on how this project has transformed the lives of youth in the target sub counties.

I take this opportunity to thank our partners Caritas Denmark for their financial and material support towards the implementation of this project. I also appreciate the Soroti District leadership, all other like minded development partners with in sort District, the community members and all our supporters for contributing towards the implementation of this project.

Your generosity and support is what gives these young men and women in the sub-counties of Gweri, Arapai and Tubur of Soroti district the resources and skills they need and open doors for the next generation.

You truly make the difference for us, and we are extremely grateful!

Yours sincerely

Dr. Jjuuko Fulgensio
Executive Director CIDI



Overview Community Driven Support to Orphans Project

Since 2018, Community Integrated Development Initiatives (CIDI) in collaboration with Danish Broadcasting Cooperation through Caritas Denmark has been implementing the “Community Driven Support to Orphans-CDSO (DBC2018) project in the sub-counties of Gweri, Arapai and Tubur of Soroti district, north eastern Uganda. The project was implemented to support three youth associations: Awoja Youth Association in Gweri Sub County, Alakaros Youth Integrated Development Association in Arapai Sub County, and Acuna Ajaku Youth Association in Tubur Sub County.

Project goal: To have more orphans and other stigmatised, vulnerable population groups in the project target area living in dignity and having improved coping skills through an increase in community driven initiatives for inclusion of and aid to the marginalised in society.

This project however is building on the previous development initiatives implemented by CIDI in the region as well as a contribution to the youth empowerment initiatives by the government of Uganda. In Soroti district like elsewhere in Uganda, the youth are experiencing high rates of unemployment and poverty thus the need for a holistic intervention for youth empowerment.

Project Objectives:

In implementing this project, CIDI was guided by these two immediate objectives:

- ✓ To establish and support permanent socially inclusive community structures providing for school uniforms, stationery and school supplies allowing for retention of approximately 500 orphans.
- ✓ To advocate for the rights of orphans and other marginalised population

Project Intervention logic



Project Theory of change

The project theory of change is built on the premise that for orphans and other stigmatised, vulnerable populations groups in the target sub counties to live a dignified life they need to come together, organise themselves into groups, then into associations to have a stronger voice as well as bargaining power both at district and national level.

CIDI has therefore worked tirelessly on strengthening youth associations: to establish and support permanent socially inclusive community structures and advocate for the rights of orphans and other marginalised population groups. With the registration of the three youth associations, the voice of the orphans and that of other marginalised groups of youth in the project target



Project interventions

Transforming youth groups into stronger and registered youth associations

CIDI has been working in Gweri, Arapai and Tubur sub counties for a couple of years implementing other projects. The Community Driven Support to Orphans project is therefore not a cast in stone.

The youth groups had been established in of CIDI's previous youth projects called "Youth Against Conflicts." However by the time of the Danish Broadcasting Cooperation (DBC) 18 Projects, the youth projects had very myopic views about their future and goals. On realising that these groups have a bigger potential in contributing to individual member life improvement and empowerment, CIDI focused on strengthening these youth association's capacity (governance leadership and accountability), helping them in developing income generating activities and enterprises to support their members with orphans vulnerable children (OVCs) under their care. These were given life skills, and upon training association members were given start up kits for their selected enterprises.

Three Associations that is; Awoja Youth Bakery and Music Dance and Drama (MDD) Association in Gweri sub county, Alakaros Youth Association and Acuna Ajaku Youth Farmers Association from the sub counties of Arapai and Tubur respectively were guided to understand and appreciate the importance of getting



CIDI's contribution towards registration of youth associations

Prior to registration, these youth associations existed as mere youths' groups without organised governance structures and their operations were disorganised. They were not recognised by their respective sub counties and district leadership and other development partners since they had informal legal status.

CIDI supported them in organising the required registration documents such as membership registers, working documents like the constitutions and registration certificates, helped them in getting clearance from the local leadership from Local council one (LC1) to LC3 chairpersons. CIDI also contracted a legal firm (Obore & Engulu Advocates) that provided legal guidance during registration and had the respective association constitutions endorsed from the courts of law.

Their cohesion and teamwork were also built through trainings on group dynamics and conflict resolution. The training entailed strengthening of democratic governance structures, putting in place adequate administration and financial systems and members trained in group dynamics, conflict prevention, entrepreneurship, business plan development, marketing, and value chain analysis.



From Left: Obenyo Charles secretary , Alice Alum member and Inau Margret Association Chairperson, Awoja Youth Association

Awoja Youth Bakery and Music Dance and Drama (MDD) group grows into an Association

Awoja Youth Bakery and Music Dance and Drama (MDD) Association is one of the three Youth Association that have benefited from CIDI’s capacity development and strengthening in group dynamics, good governance, peace and conflict prevention and youth entrepreneurship.

Before CIDI’s intervention, Awoja Youth Bakery and Music Dance and Drama (MDD) Association was just a loose bakery and MDD group, with many leadership struggles, misuse of resources and conflicts. Inau Margret, the current Association chairperson vividly remembers that leaders of the group then did not know their roles and responsibilities, and a handful of members who knew their rights. People in leadership positions had unquestionable authority and many conflicts arose due to their abuse of entrusted power. There was miss-use of funds, lack of accountability and transparency. Once a member said something negative about the leadership, the member would be expelled from the group. The group was therefore on the verge of collapsing.

Impact of CIDI’s intervention

In 2018, Awoja Youth Bakery and Music Dance and Drama (MDD) Association benefited from CIDI’s capacity building support. Looking back, Inau Margret (the current chairperson of the Association) and Alum Alice (the Treasurer) are very pleased to mention CIDI’s contribution and support towards their association’s growth. “When CIDI came it started with good governance training to empower leaders on their roles and responsibilities, this was an eye opener to most of the members then,” said Alum Alice, the current association treasurer.

“We realised that majority of the association members did not know our rights and responsibilities. CIDI also trained us in advocacy, equipping us with skills to voice our concerns, lobby from government, as well as training in planning, budgeting,

and accountability.” The registration of Awoja Youth Bakery and Music Dance and Drama (MDD) Association has enabled the associations to benefit from government support for instance; the association benefited from the Community Demand Driven (CDD) support from the Community Development Office under the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. In addition, the legal status has given the association an advocacy platform for meaningful engagement and as well as building a strong collaborative network with all the relevant local development partners.

Providing start-up capital after training

From the early stages of project implementation, CIDI realised that the strength of the associations is when its members can realise their dreams and personal development aspirations. CIDI then geared her efforts towards skilling of members – these were trained in various enterprises including tailoring, hair dressing, carpentry, apiary, and livestock management.

After the trainings CIDI provided the trained members with start-up kits that included seven sewing machines, fore locking machines, four piglets, constructed a pig sty, provided ten beehives, carpentry toolbox, vegetable growing spray pumps, seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, a saving and ledger book. With this package the group members were given a good start to transform their lives as well as demanding for good governance from their leaders.

Today, the association has grown from strength to strength boasting of 337 registered members of which 120 are male and 217 females with a functional and accountable management structures. Each of the association members is trained and after training they acquired enough skills to start earning from one of the eleven enterprises: hair saloon, carpentry, livestock, apiary, vegetable growing, tailoring, bakery, saving and credit, MDD, cobra weaving, chair, and hiring of chairs and tents.

How the enterprises work

Each enterprise is led by a committee of five people. Enterprises are the source of income for the association. When an enterprise makes a sale, they bank the money on the account of the association. The enterprise requisitions money for materials to do work from the association leader. Those running the enterprise are given a commission of about 6% of the sales and are also allowed to receive their own orders and can use association equipment which allows them to work for the association and for their own.

Integrating VSLA into Awoja Youth Association


Awoja Youth Association also runs a village savings and loans association (VSLA) as one of the enterprises that directly benefits members of the association. Each member saves minimum of UGX. 1000 – 5000/= per week. Members are eligible to

get loans at an interest rate of 3% per month from the VSLA for a period of three months. The maximum loan amount that can be given to an individual is three times a person's savings. This initiative has enabled members borrow money to invest in their business and solve their personal problems.

Supporting OVCs: Before the closure of schools due to the COVID19 pandemic outbreak, the Awoja Youth Bakery and Music Dance and Drama (MDD) Association was supporting 170 youths with scholastic materials pens and books.

Future:

Awoja Youth Bakery and Music Dance and Drama (MDD) Association is planning to buy a plot and build their own buildings to reduce on rent costs. Members are also planning to diversify into fish farming and vegetable gardening.

 **Membership to Awoja Youth Bakery and Music Dance and Drama (MDD) Association enables Abilo Jessica get a source of income**



Abilo Jessica, 33, a resident of Anganya Village, Awoja parish is a single mother of six children (three boys, three girls). After running away from an abusive relationship, in 2018, Jessica joined CIDI supported Awoja Youth Bakery and Music Dance and Drama (MDD) Association to acquire life skills to help her fend for her children and aging parents. Jessica trained in hair dressing, tailoring and cobra weaving and mastered the art. Today she earns a monthly average income of UGX.50,000/= from shoe sales, and saloon services. She says, even during the lockdown when the saloons were closed, she would be called by individuals to do the hair dressing in their homes.

This supplements Jessica's income to take care of her family, pay medical bills for her parents and buy scholastic materials for her children. Jessica feels empowered, now that she can train other young ladies, she has so far trained ten girls in hair dressing.



Apegu Samuel attain his childhood dream of becoming a carpenter

“My names is Apegu Samual, I’m 28 years old, married and a father of three kids. Before joining Awoja Youth Bakery and Music Dance and Drama (MDD) Association, I used to admire members of the group because they had a bakery and others were active in music, dance, and drama. In 2018, I was very happy to become a member of the group. Upon joining I found several enterprises to choose from in the group and I chose carpentry. Having dropped out of school in primary seven, CIDI gave me a chance to attain my childhood dream of becoming a carpenter. Another thing that motivated me to join carpentry, at home we had many broken chairs, and I took this as an opportunity to repair those chairs and beds at home. I’m happy that I have mastered making chairs, beds, tables and doors.”

Training from CIDI

“When I became a member of Awoja Youth Bakery and Music Dance and Drama (MDD) Association, I enrolled for a three-month training session by CIDI. Although my passion was in carpentry, I also trained in vegetable growing and livestock management. To sharpen our skills to another level of professionalism, CIDI gave us external mentors who further gave me practical skills in carpentry and livestock management.”

Under this project, CIDI was giving start up tools for different enterprises. Apegu Samuel also benefited from these start tool. He was given several carpentry tools and timber as his start-up capital.

“Many people in my community now know me as a good carpenter, I have expertise in table making, beds, chairs and cardboards. The most popular things here is making tables and door frames, a door frame including its door for example goes for UGX.350,000, I also make small wooden chairs which I sell at UGX. 10,000,” says Samuel while explaining his achievements

Achievements

“When I started working as a carpenter, I managed to save some money and invested in agriculture. I would plant ground nuts, millet, sim-sim, tomatoes, and cabbage. I remember there was a time when I had a bumper harvest, after selling my produce I bought a cow – each year I would buy a cow. Currently I have three cows and four exotic pigs.” Because of his hard working, Apegu was voted to be the secretary of Awoja Youth Bakery and Music Dance and Drama (MDD) Association Savings group where he is a member, saving UGX. 5000 every week. Even during the COVID 19 lockdown he was able to save, because many people would bring their old furniture for repair. He would also earn money from selling agricultural produce.

Impact of COVID 19

The Covid 19 pandemic and the lockdown greatly affected Apegu business and earnings. During the lockdown there was a ban on public transport, transporting timber and finished furniture was very challenging and customers were scarce.

Most significant achievement

“My most significant achievement from this project is the knowledge acquired. Look at me, a primary seven drop out, know I’m a trained carpenter and farmer. I use my acquired skills to provide for my family. People in my community respect and value me because I have become a role model for the youth. I have in addition trained ten youth in carpentry.” **Apegu Samuel, Awoja Youth Group**



Inculcating entrepreneur skills among orphans and vulnerable categories of people in Soroti district

One of the pillars of the Community Driven Support to Orphans project in Gweri, Arapai and Tubur, Sub counties, Soroti District was to ensure that the three associations (one in each sub county) develop income generating activities and enterprises for their members. Each association therefore came up with several incomes generating enterprises to help the association and its members accumulate incomes.

Income generating activities supported include, carpentry, bee keeping, cobra weaving, hair dressing, vegetable production, and integrated livestock production. Many youths and other vulnerable people have greatly benefited from these initiatives and some members have become successful business people in their communities.



From right: Pink T-shirt, Ayuro Agnes, training young girls how to plait hair, Acuna Ajoku Youth farmers' Association



The journey of Odulai James to a successful produce trader in Ajaku village, Ogolai, Tubur Sub County

Odulai James, 35, is a very enterprising father of six children and member of Acuna Ajaku Youth Farmers Association, Ogolai Parish in Tubur Sub-county, Soroti District. He has used the entrepreneur skills acquired from the CIDI capacity building initiatives to establish a successful business in produce as well as venturing in beekeeping.

In 2017, after being trained by CIDI on poverty eradication, Odulai James ventured into cassava buying business. He still recalls one statement said by his trainer and this is what motivated him to work hard and change his life. The trainer said: “a family without a side business, is a family close to poverty”. This statement opened his eyes to start thinking of what to do.

“I was always growing food crops for my home consumption without much thought of it being a source of income. I was purely a peasant farmer. I was trained by CIDI in off farm activities and after the training I was very motivated, I had UGX.80,000 on me, i decided to buy a weighing scale at UGX.40,000 and then use the balance of UGX 40,000 to venture in cassava business,” explains Odulai James.

“There was drought, therefore food was very scarce, I bought cassava for UGX. 40000 to sell, the following day all was bought. In a week my capital grew to UGX 100,000. I could not believe how my money was accumulating very first,” said Odulai James. “Later on, I started bulking other crops like sunflower, beans, rice, ground nuts, millet, green grams, and soya. Currently, i have connection of buyers in town who come collect produce from my store.” He further reported that he sometimes



Odulai James, member of Acuna Ajaku Youth Farmers Association off loading produce at his store, Ogolai Parish in Tubur Sub county, Soroti District

He says bulking is very profitable because he earns a profit of between UGX 100 - UGX1000 per Kilo depending on how he stores the produce. “For example, he buys sunflower at UGX 1200 and sells at UGX 1300, beans at UGX 1600 in November and sell at UGX 3000 in March the following year.”

The fruits of hard work

Odulai credits his success to the training and knowledge he acquired from CIDI. Being involved in business has increased his income levels, from the profits he makes Odulai has bought two plots of land, four bulls which he uses in ploughing and hires them out to other farmers. He has as well bought a motorcycle that he uses to collect produce from villages.

Odulai believes having several income streams is the way to go in the fight against poverty. He has diversified in bee keeping, he has ten be hives and with plans of increasing them to 15 hives.

Challenges faced

The COVID19 pandemic lockdown led to a ban on public transport and a ban on meetings. This made transporting produce to markets very difficult. The ban on transport meant trusting truck drivers with the produce but they would declare less sales, more so even most markets were closed. There are seasons when he doesn't have enough capital, yet community members continuously bring their produce to sell to him. He is glad that things are getting better nowadays. “Since I have my plots of land, I'm planning to build my own stores to save on renting'. Odulai re-assures himself. In his recommendation, he suggests that CIDI creates a revolving fund to enable group members' access capital to start on business enterprises of their choice.



Good book keeping is one of the things, Odulai James, member of Acuna Ajaku Youth

Ayuro Agnes from Acuna Ajaku Youth Farmers Association has become a renowned farmer and hair stylist in Ogolai Parish Tubur Sub county

Ayuro Agnes, 32, a resident of Ajaku village, Ogolai parish, Tubur sub county is a mother of seven children of which three are girls and four boys. She has a very inspiring story of how the Community Driven Support to Orphans Project has transformed her life. Ayuro Agnes has faced many challenges while growing up. She grew up an orphan, dropped out of school in primary two class due to lack of school fees and got married at 15 years.



Ayuro Agnes,
member of Acuna
Ajoku Youth
Farmers'
Association

In 2018, when Agnes joined Acuna Ajoku youth farmers' Association her life never remained the same. She has acquired life skills in hair dressing and farming, and she is able to take care for her family. She is now the treasurer of the association which has 291 members.

Skilling by CIDI

“When I joined Acuna Ajaku Youth Farmers Association, I trained in hair braiding and farming. I loved working in a saloon because it gives me time to tend to my gardens in the morning hours,” says Ayuro Agnes. After the training which included mentorship, CIDI gave the hair dressing saloon enterprise at Acuna Ajaku Youth Farmers Association start up kit support which included chairs, braids and hand drier. Ayuro is very proud that CIDI gave her knowledge, she charges UGX.8000 for retouch of which UGX 5000 goes to the group account and she stays with UGX 3000.

In the dry seasons, when farming activities are not possible many people work on their hair, this is the time when business is good. However, she can earn more money from individuals who call her to plait hair in their homes. The Saloon work gives her an opportunity to work with her nine months old baby Joan.

Agnes is now sharing her skills with other young girls; she is currently training seven young girls in saloon work and her future dream is to start her own saloon. Agnes has also joined Amukaru Aloet Joint Farmers' Cooperative society limited. (AJOFACOs) and has bought herself a goat and two chicken.



Acom Christine chairperson Acuna Ajuka Farmers' Association

“**My name is** Acom Christine, I’m 39-year-old married and a mother of eight children (4 boys, 4 girls), I’m the current chairperson Acuna Ajuka Farmers’ Youth Association since June 2021. I joined the Association in 2019 and since then I have achieved a lot. I was trained by CIDI in hair dressing and improved agriculture. I use the skills acquired to earn a living, I support my husband in contributing to the education and feeding of our children.



Acom Christine,
chairperson Acuna Ajoku
Youth Farmers’ Association

As the chairperson of Acuna Ajuka Farmers Association, I’m heading all enterprises including carpentry, agriculture, saloon, piggery, and cobra weaving committees. In our Association we also train the youth in different enterprises, anyone coming to acquire a skill, the person pays UGX10,000, those coming for carpentry they pay UGX15000 for registration, but they must buy their training materials. As an association our plan is to build our own vocational school. Good enough we are a registered entity, we shall use that to lobby government for support.”



“Training in tailoring has given me a source of income. Am able to save 15000/= a week, am healthy, buy clothes for my children, food and pay school fees,” **Alice Alum, Awoja Youth Group**



Eyaru Joseph from Arakaros Youth Integrated Development Association shares his story of change

Eyaru Joseph, 39, a father of five children from Arusi village, Dakabela Parish, Arapai sub county. He has since September 2020 been working as the chairperson of Arakaros Youth Integrated Development Association which has 150 youth members. He joined the group way back in 2019 and has benefited a lot from the training and support offered by CIDI to transform his life and that of other members of the association.

Before joining the association to benefit from CIDI's support, Joseph was involved in farming but with limited knowledge on crops production, planting seasons and would practice poor planting method of broadcasting seeds (just throwing seeds).



Eyaru Joseph, chairperson of Arakaros Youth integrated Development Association, Arapai sub county

“When I became a member of Arakaros Youth Integrated Development Association in 2019, I was trained by CIDI in modern farming practices like planting in rows, timely planting and growing high value crops like tomatoes and other vegetables that were not initially planted in our area. In addition, to agriculture, CIDI trained our members in carpentry, hair dressing, apiary and cobra weaving. Personally, I picked interest in vegetable growing from which I earned about UGX 500,000 last season. Am also doing apiary, so far, I have two local hives and will be harvesting honey in the next few months. The income I generated from the work I do helps in paying fees for my children, and I have a better diet for the family.



Most significant achievement of the project

The most significant achievement of the Community Driven Support to Orphans project is the knowledge it has imparted in the project target population. The practical skills training and mentorship facilitated by CIDI in different enterprises including carpentry, agriculture, saloon, piggery, apiary, and cobra weaving has enabled many previously under looked orphans and other stigmatised, vulnerable population groups in the project area live dignified lives, able to provide for their families.

Even when the project comes to close, members will continue using the agronomy and entrepreneurial knowledge acquired to run their different enterprises with a profit motive, beyond their substance needs. Skills development and acquisition is the single most achievement almost every member of the associations is proud of.

Key challenges

The COVID19 pandemic led to country wide lockdown, closure of schools and a ban meetings. This greatly affected the activities of the project, members could not meet. In addition, the establish and socially inclusive community structures supporting vulnerable school going children with scholastic materials including books and uniforms aimed at improving retention of approximately 350 orphans could not function well. Country wide the pandemic led to increased school drop out and early pregnancies. .

High levels of illiteracy among beneficially youth: Majority of the project target beneficiaries are illiterate or semi illiterate, this has made they're learning slow especially on aspects of entrepreneurship, record keeping, governance and management. CIDI has therefore to continue supporting these communities through coaching and mentorship especially the association leadership.

Recommendation

CIDI should support associations with a revolving fund: CIDI should support the three associations with a revolving fund for members to borrow and expand their income generating activities and enterprises. Many members in the saloon business, those involved in agriculture and bulking of agriculture produce need capital to invest in their enterprises, but the associations do not have money to lend to members.

Strengthen governance and accountability of associations: As the association are becoming bigger and bigger with more members joining, more efforts must be geared towards strengthening their governance, putting in place structures with competent members who are accountable and who can write proposals to tap into available government opportunities and resources.



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