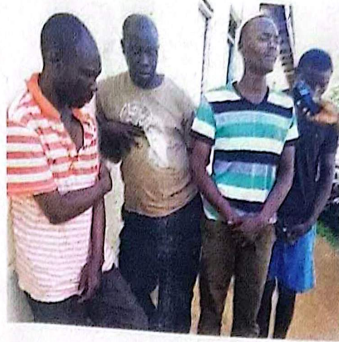




Byamukama speaks to the media as his accomplices look down at Arua CPS. Photo by Robert Ariaka

Cassava factory empowers young women

LIRA

By Hudson Apunyo

Robinah Akullu dropped out of school and had no hope of sitting for her Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE).

While still a pupil at Railways Primary School, Lira, she got a job as a casual worker at Windwood Millers Cassava Factory and raised the required money to complete payment of her school fees and was allowed to sit.

She now hopes to raise money to pay fees for her secondary education and also buy school requirements.

Like Akullu, Jenifer Adong, a Senior Two student of New Generation Secondary School, has been able to pay her fees with money earned from Windwood Millers.

"With the money I get from here, my family can get something to eat and soap to use," she said. Adong wants to be an accountant.

Maureen Apio's story is not any different. At 17, she is one of the six children in a peasant family and sat her PLE this year. The money she gets from her job at the factory helps her family to buy food and other basic necessities.

It is not only the school-going girls who are benefiting. Harriet Adongo, a single mother of five, is happy about her job. She gets money to pay rent, buy food, pay school fees and help her mother who lives in the village.

"This job is not like working in other factories where workers are harassed and abused," she said.

Windwood Millers Limited factory processes cassava into flour and sells it to breweries as an ingredient for making beer. The cassava residues are made into starch.

The workers, mostly women, are engaged in peeling, washing, grating and squeezing the cassava to remove water content. They also sieve, grind and pack

"The workers, mostly women, are engaged in peeling, washing, grating and squeezing the cassava. They earn sh5,000 daily"

They work full day and are paid sh5,000.

Ivan Okori, the factory's managing director, said they started full operations five months ago and employ 18 people. They get supplies from contracted farmers, whom they supply with planting materials at reduced prices and also from their farm of 100 acres.

In the farm, Okori said, they employ 10 people per acre during the clearing of the field.

They sell the products to the breweries and confectionery industries and starch to paper board companies.

"We hope to increase production, empower the people and export our products," he said.

At the factory, Okori said they do their best to take care of the environment by properly disposing of waste chemicals such as cyanide.

Mark Ocitti Ongom, the managing director of Uganda Breweries who visited the factory, commended them for helping to bring change in the lives of the communities.