

Making ends meet.

Some children wash utensils in local restaurants, others sell boiled eggs and roasted nuts to raise money for school fees.

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LIRA. The market day falls every Saturday and Sam Okullo leaves his bed by 6am to assemble materials for roasting maize.

By 7am, the 12-year-old is already at Amach Market.

Okullo has been roasting maize in this cattle market for the last two years. Each market day, the Primary Four pupil of St Paul Primary School saves Shs8,000.

"I wake up early in the morning to weed my maize before I go to school. And as you can see, I am selling the product of my sweat," he says, as he points at a sack containing fresh maize.

"I have both of my parents but none of them is supporting my education. They only support me in third term when they have harvested and sold the produce. So it's through this business that I am able to sponsor my education," he adds.

"I have to struggle hard here and get some money to buy books and pens, and also pay school fees."

Okullo is one of the more than 50 children aged 12 to 15 engaged in child labour at Amach Market.

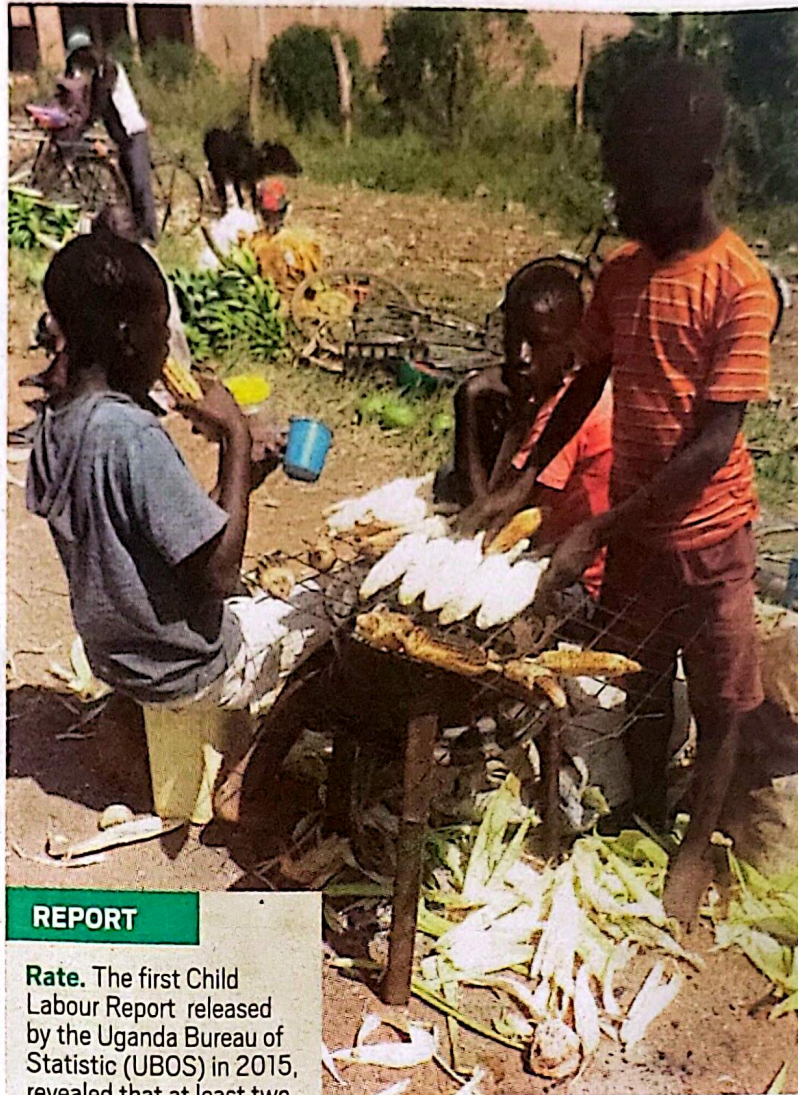
Other children wash utensils in local restaurants, sell boiled eggs and roasted ground nuts to raise school fees.

Unlike Okullo who has both parents, Erick Otim, 13, is an orphan. He lost his parents to an unknown prolonged illness five years ago. Currently, he sells polythene bags at the market.

"I stay with my brother who only knows how to play cards, so I have to struggle very hard to raise money for my school fees. I have been selling polythene bags for the last five years," says a Primary Five pupil of Amach Primary School.

Mr Isaac Otim, a parent and also a resident of Alit village in Amach Sub-county blames child labour on lack of parental sup-

Is Lira losing the battle against child labour?



REPORT

Rate. The first Child Labour Report released by the Uganda Bureau of Statistic (UBOS) in 2015, revealed that at least two million children aged five to 17 years are engaged in child labour. The report indicated that the two million child labourers accounted for 16 per cent of the entire population of 11.5 million children in Uganda then.

port. "These children are doing so because their parents are not giving them any parental support such as clothes and school

"I stay with my brother who only knows how to play cards, so I have to struggle very hard to raise money for my school fees. I have been selling black pills for the last five years."

ERICK OTIM, PRIMARY FIVE PUPIL OF AMACH PRIMARY SCHOOL

"I first wake up early to weed my maize before I go to school. And as you can see, I am selling the product of my sweat."

SAM OKULLO
PRIMARY FOUR PUPIL OF AMACH PRIMARY SCHOOL

At work. Children roast maize for sale at Amach market recently.

PHOTO BY ISAAC OTWII

fees," Mr Otim says.

The Amach Sub-county chief, Ms Harriet Aboko, also confirms that children are suffering because parents have abdicated their roles.

The head teacher of Ayito Primary School, Ms Jennifer Obong, says many children have dropped out of school as they prefer making money at the market to education. Last week, Lira NGO Forum, an umbrella organisation of civil society organisations, organised a meeting for educa-

tion key stakeholders to forge a way of keeping children out of the market.

The meeting chaired the Resident District Commissioner, Mr Robert Abak, however, disagreed on the decision by some local leaders to close the market.

The Amach LC3 chairman, Mr Bernard Adoko, told *Daily Monitor* that his sub-county reaps 65 per cent of its revenue from the market despite acknowledging that the business centre has spoiled the community.