

School dropouts earn from NGO training

NTOROKO

By Jeff Andrew Lule

When Doreen Mbabazi, 20, a resident of Karugutu in Ntoroko district dropped out of school, her life seemed shattered.

"I dropped out after Senior Four in 2013. My parents said they could not raise the money to further my education," she said.

Mbabazi got pregnant in 2014, which complicated her life even the more.

However, her life turned around in 2015 when the programme Youth in Action (YIA), funded by Save the Children, was launched in the districts of Kasese, Kabarole, Ntoroko and Bundibugyo.

The programme gave free skills training to school dropouts to enable them sustain themselves.

"I heard an announcement on radio and I rushed to the parish headquarters to get registered. I trained for five months. I realised this was my opportunity to learn something," she said.

Mbabazi gained skills in catering and making liquid soap. Today, she owns a small bakery that makes wedding cakes and a grocery in Karugutu town.

"I now support my parents and look after my child. I bought two cows and goats early this year,



Some of the beneficiaries showing off some of their products.
Photo by Jeff Andrew Lule

using my little savings in the bank," she said.

Mbabazi is among the 11,310 beneficiaries whose lives have been changed through the six-year programme that is also being

implemented in other countries, including Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia and Malawi.

The regional manager of Save the Children, western Uganda, Samuel Mukirane, said, the

programme is focused on helping the dropouts to start their own projects and getting them a startup capital of sh300,000 each.

"We trained them in various skills, including carpentry, welding, catering, mushroom farming, soap and candle making," he said.

He said a study was carried out and they realised the four districts had many school dropouts due to challenges of long distances to school due to the geography of the area, early pregnancies and poverty, among others.

Mukirane asked the Government to replicate the same model in their Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) so as to train the targeted beneficiaries before releasing funds.

The State Minister for Youth and Children Affairs, Florence Nakiwala Kiyingi, said they intend to replicate the same model under YLP programme.

She said the 42 groups formed were already benefiting from YLP and Operation Wealth Creation. Kiyingi said it was the only way Uganda could end the problem of unemployment among the youth.

Moses Sokamugawra, 21, another beneficiary who dropped out of school in 2014, has been able to open his own bakery after the training.

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By Julius Luwemba

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