

Opportunities

Junior Achievement: Promoting self-reliance amongst students

Many students go to school with inadequate or no school fees. Thanks to Junior Achievement (JA) Club, which helps to prepare young people in secondary schools for the real world by showing them how to generate wealth and effectively manage it by equipping them with self-employment skills, students are actively engaged in generating their own upkeep and paying to their school fees, writes Victoria Nampala

Aisha Namatende, a 16-year-old a Senior Four vacist, often reported to primary school with little pocket money because that is all her parents could afford. She has three siblings at home, which makes it hard for her parents to satisfy all their financial needs. However, that ended when she joined Seroma Christian High School in 2013.

Joining the JA Club

In her home economics class, Namatende was introduced to knitting items such as doormats, tablecloths and sweaters. The subject deals with other activities such as cooking, baking, pottery, weaving and crafts.

For Namatende, it was crafts that won her heart. It involved making handbags, earrings, bangles and bracelets from local materials such as beads.

"She asked me more about the handcraft making. I advised her to join the JA Club where students, who share passions and desires are united for the same purpose under different departments," Irene Nandita, the teacher in charge of home economics at the school as well as the patron of the JA Club, says.

"The students come with different ideas. I listen and build them into a live activity which they carry out in groups of 5-12. My role is to simply guide them on how to run the activities," Nandita says.

Starting club business

The club has so many departments named according to the products they make. These range from books, food to art and handicrafts.

A student must select an area of choice. Namatende joined the handicrafts department that specialised in making handbags and beads from plastic gauze as raw materials.

With six other students, they formed a committee to run the business. After attaining the necessary skills, they started a business which they called JA Craft Company. From their pocket money, each student contributed sh1,500 and in total they pooled sh9,000.



Seroma High School JA Club members selling some of their product

sh100,000

The amount of money that the students in the JA club at Seroma High School can earn from the sale of their products on a visitation day.

400

The number of JA partner schools in the country.

The club now has 350 students as registered members.

In March 2013, the shareholders bought the first batch of raw materials of beads and gauze for making crafts and earrings, which they sold to fellow students, as well members of the teaching and non-teaching staff to make a net profit of sh26,000 in June that year.

Marketing

The handicrafts are advertised in the dormitories, classrooms and the school compound. They are also displayed in the main hall during weekends, public holidays and on visitations.



Products made by JA members on display at Seroma

On such days, the group makes over sh100,000. The profits are later used

as upkeep. Namatende used her share of the money to buy school requirements and

Impact of Junior Achievement

JA Club at Seroma High School and team are among between 22,000 to 25,000 teenagers in over 400 JA partner schools in Uganda that are helped by JA to realise their entrepreneurial potential every year.

JA Partner schools include Hilton High School Mukono, Seeta High School Mukono, Mt. St. Mary's Namagunga, Stella Maris Nsube, St. Joseph's SS Nagalama, Mukono Progressive SS, St. Michael High School Mukono, Mpoma Royal College, Namulyango College School and Namulyango Secondary School. The model used in Seroma applies in all the schools.

Junior Achievement Uganda, which started operations in 2008, as a member nation of JA Worldwide, is an NGO that is dedicated to educating and inspiring young people in Uganda to be entrepreneurs.

"JA helps to prepare the youth for the real world by showing them how to generate wealth and effectively manage it, how to create jobs and how to apply entrepreneurial thinking to the workplace. Students put the lessons into action and learn the value of contributing to their communities," Josephine Kaleebi, the chief executive officer of JA Uganda, says.



CEO Kaleebi

snacks because her parents, who live in Jinja district found it expensive to visit regularly.

Achievements

Namatende and her group mates travelled to Swaziland in December 2013 when Seroma Christian High School represented Uganda at the annual Africa Junior Achiever's Competitions. This was after the team emerged the best in Uganda.

One of the most memorable event for Namatende was when Seroma Christian High School won the JA regional competitions which took place at St Joseph's Secondary School, Naggalama in Mukono district in February 2015. Seroma also scooped the best six positions at all levels.

Challenges

At Seroma, the JA Club makes many products, but the raw materials used in the process are expensive compared to the relatively low price at which the products are sold to the students.

Juggling between club activities and books is a challenge for the students so they have to be occasionally guided by the patrons.

Nandita says there are students who buy JA Club products on credit promising to pay within a certain period, but they end up defaulting, which affects the club's finances and its general existence.

What is JA?

Junior Achievement is an organisation dedicated to educating students about entrepreneurship, work readiness and financial literacy through experiential hands-on programmes.

"Students are taught the significance of saving and self-reliance through the different skills that are imparted into them in the JA clubs in their schools. It is from these skills that they are able to make products for the school community," Kaleebi says.

She says JA partners with local companies, the Government and hundreds of volunteers in their operations.

"Our operations thrive on grants and our outreach has been a free service to the beneficiaries funded by grants realised."

They also offer programmes such as the JA Job Shadow—a real workplace experience for a day; JA Innovation Camp—a think tank session to solve business challenges; JA Leadership Camp—empowering the girl-child to aspire for leadership; JA Startup for undergraduates and many more.

Edith Kayanja, headteacher Seroma Christian High School, Mukono

The school supports the JA Club because it has promoted us internationally through the different competitions they are engaged in. The members love what they do. JA has played an important role in imparting the discipline of saving for the future, keeping time, marketing and above all, how to advertise products.

What others say

Nasser Mugaya, computer teacher, Gombe SS, Butambala

The JA Club has taught students to be creative, responsible and harness opportunities to earn money from virtually anything. This has enabled many of them to get self-

Peter Musana, JA patron, Busoga High School, Kamuli

The JA Club has helped the school spend less on products such as liquid soap for washing staff vehicles and even cleaning the school since students in the club are directly involved in such activities. The money that was used in buying liquid soap and hire cleaning services is now paid to the students who provide the services cheaply through the club. The JA Club committee earned and decides how to use the money earned.