



Newspapers in Education



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Holiday makers learn shoe making in Namuwongo on Tuesday. PHOTOS/ IBRAHIM KAVUMA

WORLD WIDE

EDITOR'S PICK

Nyakecho's journey from a cleaner to an employer in Iganga

The power and fruits of resilience are evident in the life of Ms Robinah Nyakecho, a graduate who is currently pursuing an online Master's Degree in Education Computing at the American University of Beirut. She is the brain behind the Kecho-Agro-Processors company, found in the eastern Uganda District of Iganga. / P23



Students use holidays to acquire new skills

Making hay while the sun shines. As school holidays unfold, many students are turning spare time into opportunity, learning practical skills, discovering talents and helping support their families. From shoe-making workshops to sports grounds and busy markets, the break is increasingly becoming a training ground for survival, independence and preparation for the realities of adulthood.

BY SYLVIA NAMAGEMBE

In a small shoe-making workshop in Namuwongo, teenage boys gather around an artisan, their attention fixed on his hands as he demonstrates how to rebuild a damaged sole. One by one, they take turns cutting leather, stitching through thick rubber, and learning how to apply glue without wasting material. It is a hands-on lesson, where every mistake is corrected on the spot, and every finished

shoe marks progress.

"When someone brings these shoes, I start working on them immediately," says Obeid Tebandeke, one of the holiday trainees at the workshop. "If I fix two or three pairs in a day, I earn something small. That's what I use for my basic needs and partial payment for my school fees. At least I don't have to keep asking everything at home."

Across Kampala and its surrounding communities, students are increasingly spending their holidays in workshops, sports grounds, markets and community spaces that turn the break into a period of exploration, self-discovery and for some, economic survival.

In many neighbourhoods, garages, salons and small enterprises have turned into informal training grounds.

In Katwe suburb, groups of teenage boys spend their mornings at welding workshops, learning how to cut and join metal under the watchful eye of a local artisan.

At a small roadside garage, the sound of metal clanging fills the air as 16-year-old Isaac Ssenabulya tightens a bolt beneath a car. His hands are greasy, his shirt stained, but his focus is unwavering.

"I come here every day to learn mechanics during the holidays and I get some money that I use as pocket money," he says. "I don't want to just stay at home doing nothing."

Also in Kansanga, in Makindye division, girls gather at a beauty salon, practising hair braiding and styling techniques on one another.

"These children come during holidays and ask to learn," said Ms Resty Ayebale, a salon owner in Kansanga. "Some pick these hands-on skills very fast and even start earning. It also helps us, especially during busy seasons like December because they increase our workforce," she added.

Parents, too, are increasingly encouraging this shift, seeing practical skills and talent activation as a safety backup plan in an uncertain job market.

"I don't believe in fully controlling how children spend their holidays," says Ms Jane Atwongyeire, a parent in Kampala. "Yes, I involve them in my work most of the holiday time so that they can know how to run a business, but I also give them space. At times, I take them to their relatives to learn home skills."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22