

ERADICATING CHILD LABOUR IN UGANDA

LESSONS LEARNT

2021-2023



Action on Poverty (APT) works in Uganda, Sierra Leone, Kenya and Tanzania. Our vision is a world where everyone can work with pride for a better future : we work to support people to set up businesses and gain skills to establish sustainable livelihoods.

www.aptuk.org.uk



Platform for Labour Action (PLA) is female-led lawyers organisation, in Uganda that works to promote the rights of workers especially those most marginalised including youth, people with disabilities and refugees.

www.pla-uganda.org

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INTRODUCTION

This document details the lessons learnt on the implementation of the project: 'Eradicating Child Labour in Uganda', managed by Platform for Labour Action in Uganda (PLA) and Action on Poverty (APT) between April 2021 and December 2023.

The project contributed to eradicating child labour in Uganda, focusing on two regions where it is very common: Busoga sub-region and Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area. The project raised awareness of the dangers of child labour through community taskforces, child change agents, and awareness-raising in the media with **over 850,000 people reached** by these messages overall.

10,000 families acquired livelihood skills to allow them to be more resilient against resorting to child labour and 1001 victims of the worst forms of child labour were given support to return to school or vocational training. The project also worked to build the capacity of the private sector and local government to ensure child labour laws were locally adapted and implemented. **The project addressed a core need** of the target population and community, and in most areas performed far above its original targets. This learning document was developed based on the findings of the external final evaluation, together with discussions with PLA project teams, and outlines the key learnings both positive and negative. This project was generously funded by Norad.

COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

150 members of the community with existing roles in child welfare (social workers, teachers, local council representatives) were trained and given a key role in raising awareness of child rights, supporting victims of child labour and assisting vulnerable families.

- The community champions played an essential role in the project. They allowed the team to map and identify the most vulnerable children, to handle cases and to follow up. After the project at least 80% of community champions remain very active in the community.
- The utilization of community structures including the community champions, child change agents, local leaders, and local government staff ensured that the project was financially efficient and sustainable in the long term.
- The selection of children for support was transparent due to the double layer of trained community members who took the lead in identifying those most in need.

AWARENESS RAISING

As well as outreach through community champions, the project raised awareness of child rights through the training of child change agents in schools, and through multi-media.

- The SCREAM methodology worked well in schools. Children were excited by the inclusion of dance and music and so were willing to participate. The children raised awareness among their peers but also with their parents.
- A multi-media approach to awareness raising (mega phones/ local radio) was adopted due to Covid restrictions on the movement of PLA staff. This was the first time these methods had been used and they proved very useful in reaching large numbers of people. Follow up studies showed that the messages had been well understood in the community.



SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE PARENTS



The project aimed to reach 12,000 households with livelihood skills and access to finance in order to prevent parents from resorting to child labour

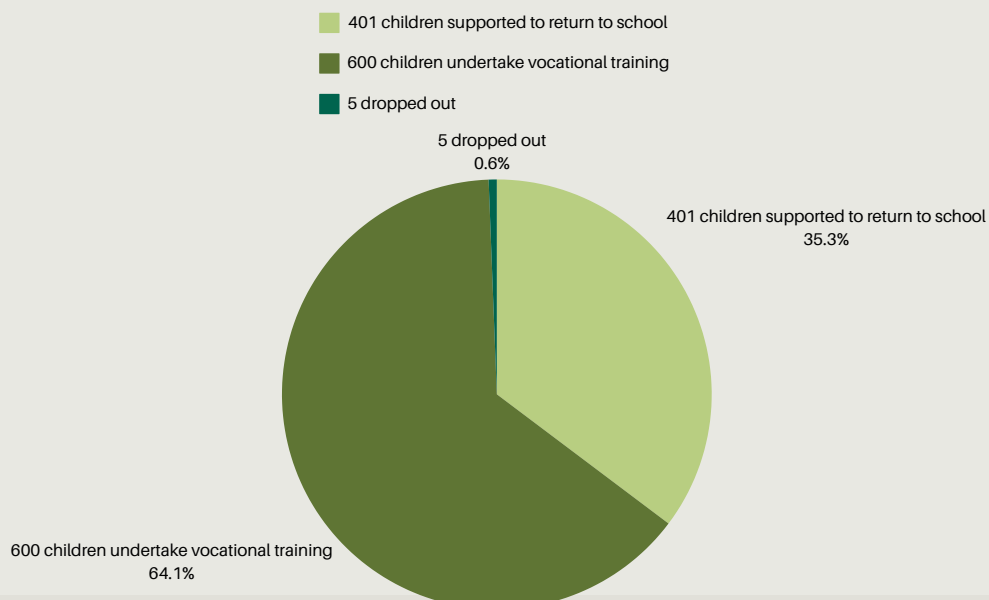
- Integrating entrepreneurial and livelihood skills in community outreaches (sensitization and awareness creation sessions) led by community champions, was an invaluable strategy for reaching the targeted communities, since it led to the sessions being popular and well attended.
- The livelihood skills training component of these sessions constituted an indispensable game changer in addressing child labour. Enabling access to alternative livelihood sources made it possible for the parents to comply with calls to keep their children in school.
- The grouping of parents into support groups and VSLAs was useful in providing them with peer support, business and training opportunities. Community champions were also part of these groups so could provide ongoing advice. Peer pressure within the group, encouraged the parents to keep their children in school.
- However, members of the groups were very vulnerable and not able to contribute to savings or to start a business without some financial support. It was necessary to adapt the project design to provide some groups with start up capital in order for them to function effectively and support a savings culture.

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT TO VICTIMS OF CHILD LABOUR

The project supported **401 children to return to school**, through provision of school materials and ongoing psycho-social support. 600 children who were not able to reintegrate into formal schooling were **supported to undertake 6 months vocational training followed by 3 months internship**.

- The psychosocial support for children who returned to school or entered vocational training was very important in keeping them motivated and preventing drop out. PLA had implemented previous projects without this element and retention was much better in this project (only 5 of the 1001 children involved dropped out).
- The vocational training element was very popular in the community and made life-changing difference to many of the children who benefitted. **6 months after the end of the internships, 68% of the young people had found employment in their chosen field.**
- Children on the vocational programmes were unused to living in a boarding school setting and some struggled to fit in. The nature of the setting meant that it was unsuitable for teenage mothers who had to leave their babies in the care of others. Skilling centres or apprenticeships systems which do not require boarding might better meet the needs of former child labourers.

1001 victims of the worst forms of child labour where given support



EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT TO VICTIMS OF CHILD LABOUR

- The project did not provide tool kits and this was a serious hindrance to some children in gaining employment (particularly in mechanics and tailoring). Employers would not allow them to borrow tools so they could not work. In future, it may be possible to approach local businesses for donations of tools as in kind support.
- There were **budget challenges** with the vocational training programme. Due to Covid, the number of children in a position to return to school was reduced and many more needed the opportunity for vocational training. Some support was provided by parents and by the vocational institutes (eg mattresses) but many children were without any outside support. Parents tended to expect the project to cover all the needs for their children, and no longer took responsibility for them. **An element of cost sharing would be better for future projects** in order to avoid this dependency and make the intervention more cost-effective.
- The fact that PLA staff approached local businesses to host internships meant that the employers' remuneration expectations were very high. **It might have been better for the interns themselves to approach the possible placements.**



EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT TO VICTIMS OF CHILD LABOUR

- All vocational trainees were awarded a **'Non-formal certificate'** which is for trainees who have not completed primary school. However, some young people had completed primary or several years of secondary so could have received a 'Formal certificate' if the training period had been extended.
- **16-17 year old vocational trainees have had more success in gaining employment** than younger candidates who require further support and training before being able to join the workforce.
- **The most successful sectors** for vocational training (in terms of beneficiaries gaining employment) were: motorbike maintenance, welding, building and carpentry. Hairdressing was reasonably successful if trainees could differentiate their skills from others (eg also provide manicures). Motor vehicle maintenance did not easily lead to employment as garages/customers are unwilling to entrust their car to a young person. Tailoring was also problematic as the cost of materials/ sewing machine was prohibitive to young people.
- **The internship financed by this project was 3 months.** This is the minimum useful time - 4-6 months would have better allowed the trainees to embed their skills.
- Some children had significant additional needs - orphans, abandoned, child headed households. It would have been useful to know more of the children's background from the outset and group those with additional needs.



CAPACITY BUILDING OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT CHILD LABOUR LAWS

The project provided training to private sector employers and resource support to labour officers to carry out workplace inspections. The project also advocated for greater budget allocation for labour officers.



- Since the project directly contributed to the work of the district and sub county officials as well as enabling them to fulfil their mandate, their buy-in and support towards the implementation of the project was good.
- Many employers/private sector actors have inadequate understanding of the labour laws and standards. This accounts for some of their undue practices including employing children in the worst forms of child labour. Recognizing that employers have gaps in their knowledge and targeting them with training helped them to comply faster than exclusively pushing for compliance.



CAPACITY BUILDING OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT CHILD LABOUR LAWS

- Building synergies between the project team, labour officers, local leaders, employers, community members, parents, and the affected children was critical for addressing the issue of child labour. Isolated interventions may not achieve much and in some instances, can be counterproductive. For instance, engaging employers to stop employing children can be self-defeating if the parents are not simultaneously engaged.
- **The workplace inspections were more effective in the Eastern region** where the project was engaging with formal employers (rice/sugar factories). In the Central region, most children were working in the informal sector (hawking, scrap collecting, working in markets) and it proved difficult to impact these sectors.
- Lobbying for increased budget allocation to district labour offices was largely unsuccessful. This was due to budget cuts at a national level. Advocacy needs to be bottom up but also top down - **it would be necessary to engage on the funding issue with national level ministries as well as with district government.**
- Advocacy at the district level did raise awareness among duty bearers and lead to a resolution to create local ordinances and by-laws concerning child labour which are now under development.