



CHAIN OVC PROGRAM

Children's plight in times of
Covid 19 pandemic.



*Tippy taps constructed by CHAIN in communities, a
Hand washing tool and an ideal mitigation measure for
Covid 19.*

Introduction

In Uganda, the corona virus was known long before it arrived in the county. Reports from media were giving daily updates that the outbreak of corona virus, also known as COVID-19, began in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and that the rising infections and deaths in China, Italy and Spain were alarming. We understood this to be a global virus and day by day we silently prayed and hoped that the corona virus would not enter Uganda.

Though the virus was slow to take roots in Africa, February 2020 came and the first case was recorded. Then it spread rapidly but with low deaths. Cases were also recorded coupled with lockdowns in countries that are neighbouring Uganda; a pointer that the virus could also be in Uganda though not yet identified.

With this prevailing challenging situation, a directive was given by the president of Uganda to close all education institutions as a mitigation measure against the spread of the COVID 19 pandemic, on Friday 20th March 2020 indefinitely and at a later date the whole country was put under lock down.

In the beginning it was all joy as they looked forward to staying home “indefinitely” but as days passed uncertainty set in coupled with challenging situations at home such as lack of food. Many children felt isolated, lonely and more vulnerable since the closure of the schools as their education journey was blurred. Children around the country faced increasing threats to their safety and well-being – Incidences of violence against children, stress, and harm at home and in their communities in the midst of the COVID 19 pandemic increased.

Social lives were affected: public transportation banned, markets restricted to selling foodstuffs and businesses shut which radically changed everyday social lives across Uganda, as in many other countries. Many of our parents and guardians earn daily wages, so inability to work due to lockdown was yet another pandemic in itself. This situation led to a lot of instability in many households because food, among other basic survival needs for children was going to be scarce. The government strived to distribute food but it was not sustainable and several incidences of people fighting for food were witnessed. Amidst the struggle of acquiring the required and enough basics in their households, an outstanding need for introducing permaculture initiatives for purposes of improving vulnerable children’s access to nutritious food was identified.

Under these challenging circumstances vis-à-vis the deep concern about the plight of our children, CHAIN devised means of reaching out the children. Indeed Covid 19 impacted the way we do our work with limitation of face to face interactions. The only option was to follow up through phone calls. The OVC Coordinator made calls to check on the welfare of children, counsel and restore hope. The children were advised to make use of the lockdown to revise their notes and also

explore the skills that they have been acquiring during the numerous OVC holiday programs and kill the prevailing boredom – a life changing experience as no one knows when it will end.

For example, what services can children offer people in their community so as to earn some money?? Such earnings could supplement on filling some of the gaps in their households and also keep the children active.

Children in the candidate classes (primary 7, senior 4 and senior 6) have voiced out that they are keen on revising their notes blended with little time for play. The other category of children is engaging in different activities in their different communities as follows:-

A glimpse at how children are coping with change in their different communities:

- Walugembe Ashlaf – primary six pupil, fetches water for people in the community and a jerycan goes at Shs 500 an equivalent of 0.13 dollars.



Ashlaf Walugembe, seen smartly dressed in a school uniform amidst classmates. It's now months when he last wore the same uniform to go to school.



Ashlaf, in a white t-shirt, fetching water from a well in the community. Scarcity of water in households is evident given the so man lined up jerrycans purposely to get water. The scarcity is usually toned down whenever it rains as people usually harvest water and it such times that Ashlaf is out of business.



Ashlaf can now purchase good clothes and shoes for himself in addition to some other household basics like soap and sugar.



In the picture is Ashlaf and his mother.

- Buteme Ritah is currently in Senior 1, and during the lockdown she makes crotchets/strings for shoes – a skill she attained during the OVC holiday programs; with Jean (a volunteer at CHAIN) when they learnt to make sponges, the bracelets they made with Rosa (one of the German OVC sponsors) and when at the Skating Park. Below is Ritah making the strings for the shoes with her friend from the community looking on.



Ritah stays with her mother in Kamwokya, a city suburb that majorly harbours youths. Their neighbour earns a living through making these shoes and during the lockdown, she engaged the children in her community in the skill. Ritah did not find it difficult to grasp the art involved in making the

strings given the knowledge she had attained at CHAIN during the OVC holiday programs.



Ritah makes the strings and thereafter the neighbour fixes the strings onto the shoe soles. A pair of these shoes goes at Shs. 10,000 / \$2.67= and out of this (labor for making the strings) Ritah gets Shs. 3,000= / \$0.80.



Some of the finished shoes.

- Wamala Jonathan and Nalutaaya Josephine live in Kyebando with their mother Teopista Nanteza and they have 4 siblings. Teopista is a hard working mother. At the time of identification, the family was renting a one roomed temporary mud house but now they shifted to renting a one roomed semi permanent house.



Family members during the identification exercise - 2015

Jonathan is in primary seven and Josephine – primary six. They sell steamed maize in the evenings. Each maize goes at Uganda shillings 500= (dollars 0.53) Joseph goes for revising sessions in the mornings because he is in a candidate class and embarks on the task of selling steamed maize with Josephine in the evenings, to enable the family acquire the basics for the households. At the time of the visit, Joseph was coming from the neighbourhood to purchase 6 weeks old chicken (each at Shs 10,000= / \$2.67) so that he could feed them for a month also and then resell them at a higher price (each at Shs 30,000 / \$8.01) when they have gained weight and bigger in size at 2 and a half months.



Teopista (the mother) buys raw maize (each at Shs 100=/\$0.027) from the market and steams it /adds value to it and then resells it at Shs 500 / \$ 0.13= each.



Teopista tussling with the hot maize, for she has to ensure that she packs it when still hot – a requirement from the customers, then she wraps it in a polythene bag to enable the maize keep hot.



Josephine and Joseph waiting for their mother to finish the parking exercise. Their young brother is also busy enjoying the comfort at the mother's back. Inset is the

elder sister busy preparing Katogo; a mixture of rice and meat, matooke and meat, cassava and meat which she and the mother sell in the evening, each plate at Shs 2,000= / \$0.53 or Shs 3,000= / \$ 0.80.

This is a daily routine for the family.



Teopista helping Jonathan get his merchandise on the head.

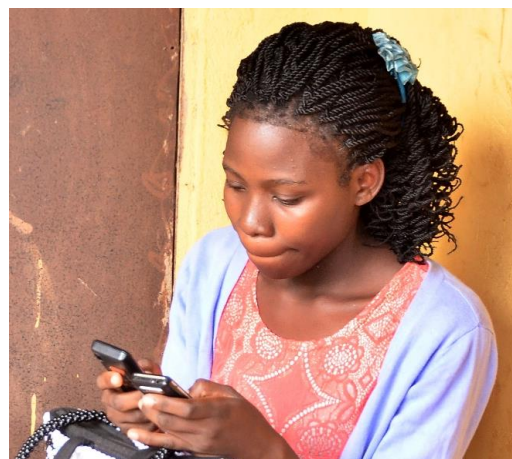


Teopista helping Josephine get her lot on the head.



Jonathan and Josephine setting off from home for the neighbouring communities to sell the maize.

- Suzan Nakajje – 1st year student at Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) – makes liquid soap and packs it in different quantities from half litre up-to 5 litres and sells it. Suzan acquired this skill from the senior school where she attained her education. From the soap savings she has managed to open up a mobile money service project to boost her finances and assist with the gaps at home. She applied to become an agent for Airtel and MTN telecommunications networks in Uganda and she was given permission.



In her own hand writing

I finished S.6 in 2018 and during the vacation, I got some work to do in a salon for three months. With the savings from the salary, I started making liquid soap for sale.

I pack the soap in quantities of 20 liter jerrycans costing 40,000 shillings, 10 liter costing 20,000 shillings, 5 liter costing 10,000 shillings and small bottles of 1000 shillings.

I have sold the soap since then until now that I raised savings and started up a mobile money business.

I get commission on every deposit and withdraw transaction. I make for example I receive 300 shillings on every deposit, 350 on every 10,000 withdraw transaction and sh.400 on every airtime of 10,000 shillings. With this, I can raise sh.50,000 on airtel and 50,000 on MTN monthly or more depending on the transactions made.

Gratitudes to the CHAIN UGANDA for the academic support rendered to me to boost my entrepreneurship skills.

- Asaph Munyigwa – sat for senior six exams and passed well, he is yet to join university – to pursue a bachelor's degree in Law. Asaph's grandfather a retired reverend, used to dry clean people's clothes from the community and garments for the clergy. The grandfather is suffering from a stroke and high blood pressure. When Asaph finished his senior six, he re-awakened his grandfather's skill and under the mentorship of the grandfather, Asaph is now a trusted and skilled laundry and dry cleaner in the community. He tendered to wash and iron the pump attendants uniforms of HASS Petrol Station – a gas station in the neighbourhood at a fee of Shs 2,000= / \$ 0.53= for each uniform. On a daily basis he cleans the offices and the compound of this station and earns Shs 7,000= / \$ 1.78= for the daily cleaning.



Asaph exhibiting some of the techniques when ironing a coat; first ironing the lining of a coat, not applying the hot iron box directly onto the coat but via a damp cloth and using a small pillow when ironing the shoulders of the coat. Asaph charges Shs 5,000= / \$ 1.33= for a coat and a suit goes at Shs 10,000= / \$ 2.67=



Asaph also purchases hangers and polythene rolls to make covers for his client's coats. This packaging alone goes at Shs 2,000= / \$ 0.53=.

- Esther Nakitto is in primary six at St Peters Kanyanya. During the lockdown, she helps her grandmother who runs a restaurant in the Community.



- Ivan Kirumira – sat for senior six exams and passed well, he is yet to join university to pursue a bachelor's degree in Agriculture and Rural Innovation at Makerere University. In his vacation, Ivan decided to make bricks for sale. He made 12,000 bricks and fired them. Each brick will be earning him Shs 210= / \$ 0.056. At the time of visit, he had sold off 1,000 bricks and he earned Shs 210,000= / \$ 56.06. This income helped him to pay off his friend who helped him to pile the bricks plus the firewood that baked the bricks.



Ivan and his mother



Ivan posing beside the pile of his fired bricks.

Conclusion

As the Covid 19 pandemic has shown, life can change very quickly and very unpredictably. Children too are seen to actively engage in facing the unknown in their different household environment, with hope that life will ever return to normal.

“WE ARE MISSING SCHOOL AND THE HOLIDAY PROGRAMS AT CHAIN,” - A COMMON AND UNIFORM UTTERANCE FROM THE CHILDREN.



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