



GIRLS  
GET EQUAL

# VOKA PROJECT



Witnessing successes of Youth and Innovation in Employment

 Mwanza Tanzania

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## WORD FROM COUNTRY DIRECTOR

Youth employment remains a major challenge, both at global and national level. In Tanzania, youth unemployment stands at 11.5 per cent. This is in spite of the high rates of economic growth in the past decade averaging 7 per cent. Unfortunately, the rapid gains in economic growth and education have not translated into productive and decent employment significant enough in alleviating poverty for both young men and women.

Therefore, Plan International, in collaboration with the government of Tanzania along with other partners, implemented a two-year Youth and Innovation in Employment project, funded by the European Union through VET ToolBox - Enabel. Our desire is to empower youth through increasing employability to disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

We, at Plan International, are committed to supporting young people to develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the world of work. This is part of our strategy. In our experience working to empower young people in Tanzania, we have learned to ensure that all young people, including the most marginalised and disadvantaged, can unlock their potential through access to decent work will drive progress towards sustainable, inclusive development.

We appreciate the kind support of our stakeholders including Mwanza Regional Administration and Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in Illemela and Nyamagana Districts and the community at large. Plan International was moved by their commitment to youth economic empowerment as demonstrated during implementation of the project. We were also touched by support provided by Vocational Education Training (VETA), Small Industries Development Organisation (SIDO) and Social Economic Development Initiative of Tanzania (SEDIT).

We join our hands together in celebrating the achievements we have made so far. We hope that with existing sustainability plan, we will witness even more achievements and a better future for young people especially young women with equal opportunities for both.

Thank you very much!



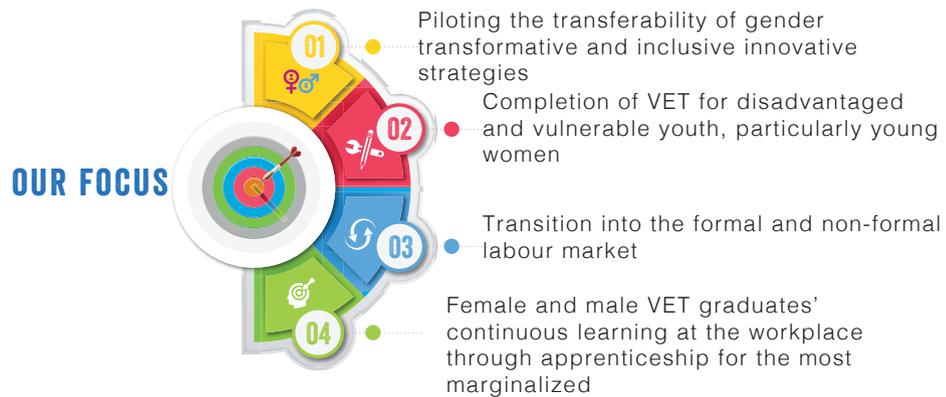
Mona Girgis

Country Director

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Vijana na Ubunifu Katika Ajira (VUKA) project was a two-year project implemented between 2019 to 2021. VUKA stands for “Youth and Innovation in Employment”. The project was co-funded by the European Union (through Enabel and VET Toolbox) and Plan International Belgium.

The project aimed at contributing to increased employability of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups (age 15-24), particularly young women, from most particularly marginalized wards in Ilemela (Ilemela & Kitangiri) and Nyamagana (Nyamagana & Kishiri) districts in Mwanza region, Tanzania.



The project successfully embraced public-private partnership, with the active participation of the national Vocational Educational and Training Authority (VETA) and Small Industries Development Organisation (SIDO) as well as Social and Economic Development Initiatives of Tanzania (SEIDIT).

## PROJECT GOAL

To contribute to disadvantaged and vulnerable youth's, particularly young women's, improved employability, and inclusive access to labour market.

## SPECIFIC PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- To pilot the transferability of innovative strategies, conducive towards improved market-relevant skills and sustainable employment for disadvantaged and vulnerable youth, particularly young women.
- To contribute to an enabling environment for disadvantaged and vulnerable youth, particularly young women, towards improved employability and inclusive access to labour market.

## MAJOR ACTIVITIES

### Youth Access and Complete Vocation Education and Training



In collaboration with VETA, the Local Government Authorities, and other stakeholders the project piloted the transferability of innovative strategies to support disadvantaged and vulnerable youth, particularly young women access and completion to Vocation Education and Training (VET).

The project developed 6 Vocational Education Training (VET) outreach centers within a reasonable walking distance (1km), provided childcare support to 37 young mothers attending VET centres, and engaged 7 master crafts to provide training to illiterate youth.

The project also provided training and awareness sessions to youth, families, and community members to address harmful gender norms that prevent youth especially young women participating in the training centers. Youth enrolment into VET centers were governed by the market opportunities identified in the Labour Market and Skills Analysis.

To support youth attendance and participation in the VET outreach centers, the project implemented a gender transformative awareness campaign targeting youth, local government officials, traditional leaders, spouses and parents. The sessions-initiated discussions challenging the gender norms that hinder young women's access to economic opportunities.

## Youth Transition to formal and informal employment opportunities

Through this project, Plan mapped and sensitised private sector to work with youth using the potential market opportunities identified. Plan in collaboration with VETA and SIDO developed business cases to support youth in career guidance and linkage with the private sector. After training, youth were attached in private sector to gain practical experiences of the courses that they undertook.

The Youth Savings and Loans Associations (YSLA) facilitated a culture of saving and provided learning about financial literacy skills. The skills enable youths to access micro-loans to cater for their needs. The associations also helped youth access capital for self-employment and provided safe space for delivering training, including gender related sessions through gender mentors, business skills training and digital literacy awareness which are vital for youth employment.



## Youth benefit from sustained and continuous learning support

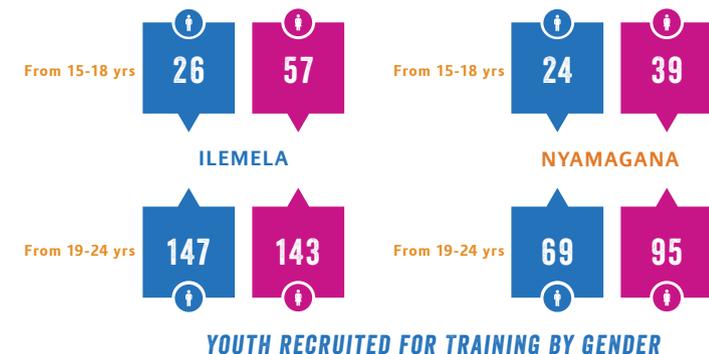
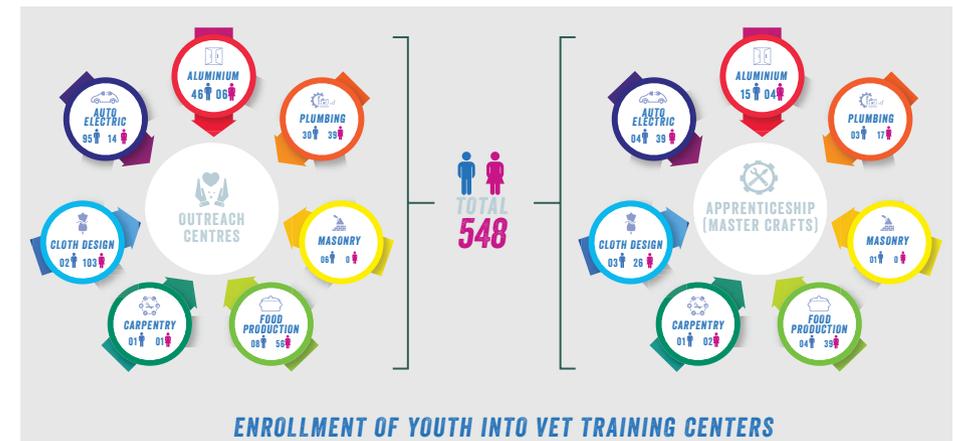
SIDO Mwanza conducted regular visits to the potential employers on potential employment opportunities and made follow-ups on the progress of the apprentices. Also facilitated careers advice sessions to enable youth linkage with the potential employers for job interviews.



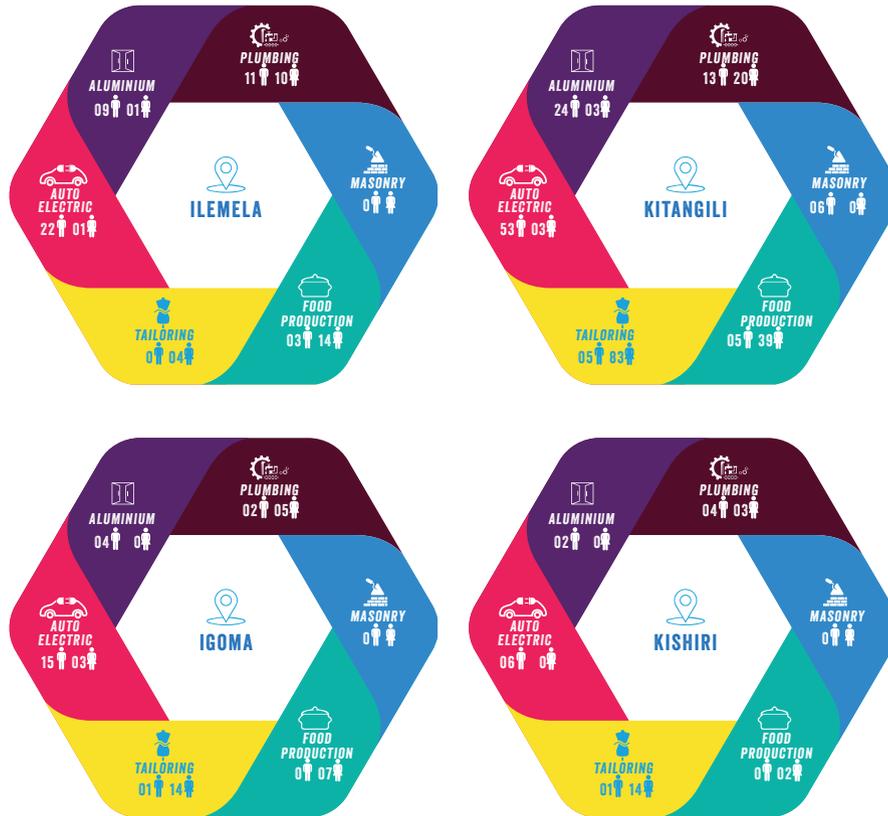
## KEY ACHIVEMENTS

### Vocational Education Training through an innovative, inclusive, and market-driven outreach program

- A total of 548 youths (216 males and 332 females) aged 15 to 24 years were enrolled into Vocational Education Training courses through 6 outreach centres and 7 Master crafts centres. Before training, all youths in Vocational Education Training (VET) outreach centres and master crafts received compulsory cross-cutting training on life skills, entrepreneurship and safety at workplace.



### OVERALL TRAINING COMPLETION



**412** youths

- A total of 15 (11 males and 4 females) Vocational Training instructors from VETA were identified and engaged to provide vocational training in the outreach centres in various courses including Designing, Sewing and Cloth Technology, Plumbing and Pipe Fitting, Auto Electrical, Masonry, Aluminium and Food Production.

### Employers' awareness on equal employment rights of youth

- A total of 61 employers from welding, and electrical fields were identified. 6 are currently engaged as master crafts providing training to youths. The aim is to enable employers demonstrate awareness of equal employment rights to both male and female youth.
- 157 young people secured spaces for internship provided by 70 employers to enhance their skills and competencies. Also 23 youth (female 10; male 13) obtained employment opportunities.

### Innovative Child Care Support

- 37 young mothers with 37 children under five years old were supported to access innovative childcare support as they attended training. This was meant to help participants with childcare responsibilities have equal learning environment like young men.

### Youth Savings and Loan Associations (YSLA's)

- 24 Youth Savings and Loan Associations with 600 (334 female and 266 male) members were established in Ilemela and Nyamagana districts.
- The Youth Savings and Loans Associations saved TZS 5,484,100.00 (About USD 2300), TZS 1,261,000 (About USD 550) in loan with TZS 2,700,900.00 (About USD 1100) social funds balance for the last cycle.
- The 600 members received various training including entrepreneurship, financial literacy and awareness creation on negative social cultural practices.
- 22 YSLAs groups were linked to financial institutions where members opened up bank accounts and exposed youth to digital applications for savings and loans.

## LESSONS LEARNED

1. The Youth Savings and Loans Associations Model has proved effective in enabling young people to access savings and loans services, which are often difficult to access through formal financial services. It enables access to capital for business start-up and growth and savings and loans services to help manage personal finances. It also helps young people to develop financial skills, useful for wage and self-employment, and promotes good management of personal finances.
2. Involvement of the Local Government Authorities supported the smooth implementation of project especially in mobilization of young women and men for various activities.
3. Young people are enthusiastic and determined on Vocational Education Training. However, delays may result into disappointment or dropping out of youth who may not be very patient. It is, therefore, essential to ensure a close follow-up of the youth beneficiaries' motivation to participate in the project and ensure the activities are implemented in a coordinated way and timely manner.
4. Identification of market opportunities at the early stage increase the chance of youth to tap in the existing demand within formal and informal employment opportunities.
5. Many vocational centres are located at regional level and distance and costs prevent enrolment for those with mobility/ security challenges, childcare constraints and low incomes. This, as much as training duration, makes them inaccessible for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable.



## SUCCESS STORIES

### YOUNG MOTHER RECLAIM HER FUTURE THROUGH SKILLS

After losing her mother when she was three years old, Rose Kashakala and her brother were raised by family members who always tried their best to provide for them, but their efforts fell short.

“My father did not want anything to do with me since I was a baby. And when my mother passed away, I went live with my grandfather. But my step grandmother mistreated me, so I moved in with my aunt Elizabeth.”

Her aunt put her through primary school and after seven years she joined secondary school.

In 2013, Rose finished secondary school. Sadly, her grades were not good enough for her to continue with the next level of her education.

“I had hoped to go far with my education, and I was disappointed I did not. I knew that was the end of my education, so when my other aunt Angel asked me to move to Mwanza I did not hesitate.”

Rose moved to Mwanza hoping she would find a job which would enable her to help her brother who was still in their hometown of Nzega. She got a job as a shopkeeper, and because she lived with Angel, the little money that she made went to her physically challenged brother and anything that remained, she saved.

“My brother lived with my uncle. And because my uncle had a big family, I had to send my brother money to help him meet his needs.”



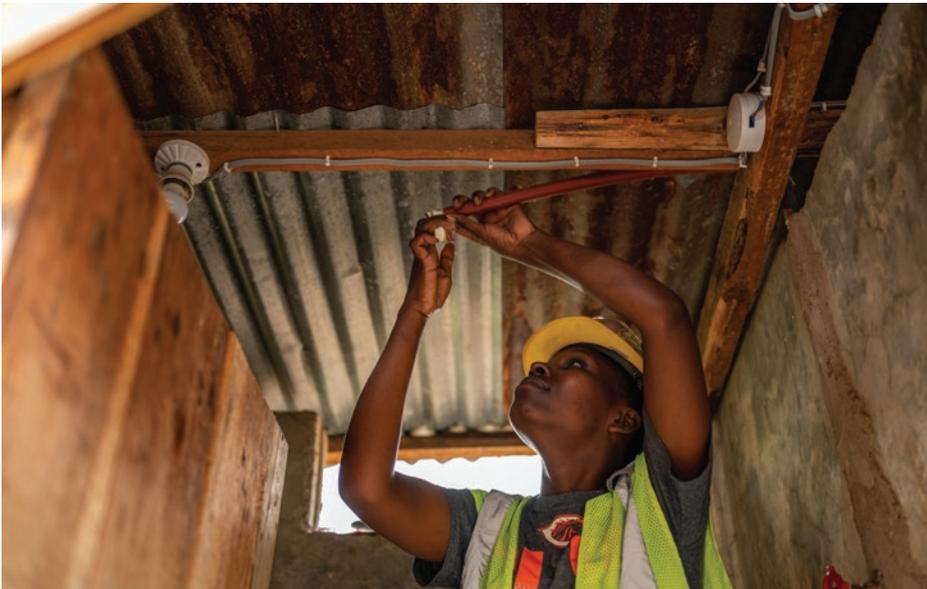
Caption:

The then sixteen-year-old, continued working as a shopkeeper for a while. Though her salary always came late, she never stopped working. Just as a glimmer of hope was about to appear in Rose's life, things took a turn.

Her aunt Angel and her husband got separated, and she suddenly did not have a home. While this was happening, her place of work was closed by auctioneers. Thankfully, she had saved some money.

"I was able to buy a bed and mattress and rent a single roomed house. I struggled for a while, and I had to stop sending my brother money. But someone gave me Tshs 30,000 (\$ 12.96) which I started a business with."

Rose started selling potato crisps and roasted peanuts around her neighborhood. For a while she thought that would be the only job she would have, but she got another job. She started working at a daycare in a church close to her home.



Caption:

It had been four years since Rose moved from Nzega to Mwanza. She was now working at her third job and life had changed for her. The young girl who moved to a city she had never been before, was now a twenty-year-old mother to be.

"I found out I was pregnant in September 2017. The father of the baby had promised me that he would help me take care of her once she was born, but he did not. I started worrying a lot on how I would raise my child alone."

Rose always wanted a different life for her child when time came to having one.

"I hoped that when I have a child, I would not raise it alone like I was raised. I wanted her to experience the care of two parents which I never had."

When Rose neared giving birth, her aunt Elizabeth who raised her, left Nzega and move to Mwanza to help her niece. In 2018, Rose gave birth. Though she was not getting help from the father of her child, she was relieved her aunt was there with her.

Her job at the daycare, was helping her pay for rent and buy food but it was not enough to meet her newborn's needs.

"I had to find something else to do because I was afraid if my daughter got sick, I would not afford to take her to the hospital."

She took a part of her salary and started a business selling beef skewers at a bus station. She would spend her morning to afternoon at the church while her aunt took care of her daughter. Then in the evening, while her aunt was also working, Rose took her daughter with her to sell skewers.

"My daughter started getting ill and I realized it was because of the cold and the smoke from my business. I had to stop selling skewers, but I was still selling roasted peanuts."

Even though both Rose and Elizabeth were working, they were still struggling. Their rent had gone up, Rose's daughter needed food and regular medical care. Their struggles continued to pile on after the daycare where Rose worked was closed.

It took a while but Rose, got another job as a shopkeeper. She was selling clothes and was being paid on commission. While working there she was also introduced to the VUKA program.

"I was told about the VUKA program by one of my friends. And after finding out they wanted to help youths who were struggling get employable skills, I decided to join. We first had to form YSLA groups where we were given financial literacy training, gender training and we were told we would be getting skills training."

Before the skills training started, Rose split her time spending half of it at work and the other at the outreach center. And when time came for her to choose a skill that she wanted to learn, Rose chose plumbing.

Though her outreach center was closer to her home, Rose worried. She had a job that she needed; she had a daughter who still needed her undivided attention, but she also wanted to attend every class.

“I needed my job for my daughter, I did not have anyone to help me take care of her while I was away also, but I also knew VUKA program was a chance for me to change our lives.”

When the plumbing classes started, Rose took theory classes in the morning and practical in the afternoon. She could no longer go to work and had to quit. Though it was not an easy decision, Rose knew it would pay off.

“When I fully committed to my training. I was informed that they had a daycare service for mothers like me. That lift a huge weight off my shoulders. I did not have to worry about the safety of my daughter. I would take her with me to the outreach center, focus on my training and check on her between breaks.”

Though their income had gone down, Rose did not stop to fully participate in her trainings, which made her one of the standout students. Her aunt took the responsibility of providing the everyday needs of the family.

“I did my best in class to learn. My gender classes helped me see plumbing as a skill for both boys and girls and I became fully focused. When we finished our training, I was a capable plumber, and through the YSLAs I had a place I can save and get affordable loans when I needed it.”

After successfully completing her training, Rose now started looking for internship. And after searching she got one.

“I could not hide my excitement when I first reported to work. I could finally start seeing my life changing. I had a skill that ensured I always had work to provide for my daughter and because she asked me to enroll her in school, I could afford her paying for it to.”

Rose is one of the few VUKA program graduates with a paying internship and still gets plumbing work in neighborhood.

She concluded by saying; “A few years back, I could not tell you for certain how my life would be. But now I know I wanted to study more about plumbing so that my daughter does not lack anything.”

## INSTALLING NEW CONFIDENCE THROUGH SKILLS

When he was in school, all Mustafa Maombi wanted was a clean pair of uniform. He dreaded his trips to school, and watching his friends play joyfully while he distanced himself was the worst part of it all.

“I only had one pair of uniform and I could not always wash it every day. Sometimes I had to wear it while dirty and that always made me uncomfortable around everyone.”

21 years-old Mustafa was not born far from the shores of Lake Victoria in Mwanza. It is on this same lake that, Mustafa's father Maombi spends most of his nights trying to fulfill his family's needs. But to his dismay, his efforts yield little with every passing day.

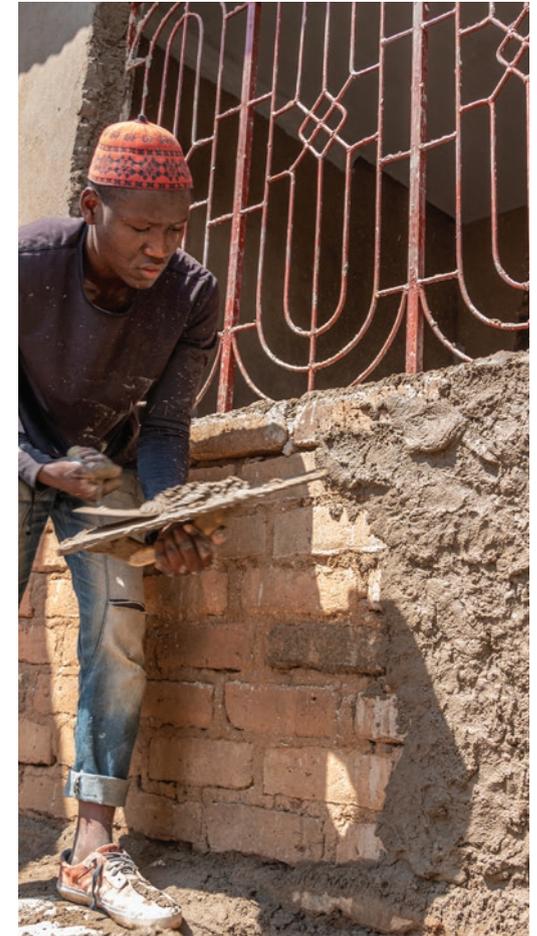
“We always had food at home and my father always contributed to paying my school fees. But he could not afford buying us extra clothes. I only had a few including school uniform.”.

With his condition Mustafa could hardly concentrate in class. It was not hard for him to get through primary school. Most of the children at his primary school came from the same background as him.

When he joined secondary school in 2014, the young teen was surrounded by children from a different background.

“I only went as far as form two, I failed an exam that would have allowed me to progress to the next level.”

Mustafa returned home and that was the end of his education. Upon his return, his father did not want him to stay at home idle. He looked for a garage where his son could learn how to be a mechanic and as soon as he did Mustafa joined.



“I stayed at the garage for short while, but I was still not comfortable around people. I was still distancing myself so I could not learn anything.”

After leaving the garage, Mustafa did not have anything to keep him busy. He stayed at home and helped his parent with work at their shop. But their business went down, and they closed the shop. His mother became a food vendor and Mustafa helped his mother to distribute food.



Caption:

It was through his trips helping his mother distribute food that Mustafa found something he wanted to do.

“I used to take food to construction sites, and I got to interact with other youths in the sites.”

Mustafa had found something he liked but he did not know how to pursue it. Years had passed since he last went to school. His father at home was insisting for him to return to secondary school but Mustafa felt he was too old.

“My father and I were constantly arguing because he wanted me to restart secondary school. But I felt I would be the eldest student in the school, and I did not think I would do well.”

Mustafa stayed at home, he got food at home and a bed to sleep at night. Whenever he needed money for his upkeep, he had to sell a one of the pigeons he kept. He did not always get a customer and when did not find one, he could not ask money from his father.

He continued helping his mother selling food at construction sites. During one of his trips, one of his friends from the construction site told him about the VUKA Program.

“He told me it is a project aimed at helping youth to get jobs. We were to organize into groups and then we would later receive skills training. When I heard about skills training, I knew this was something that would help me.”

When the VUKA Program started in November in 2019, Mustafa became one among the 400 plus youth who participated. After forming groups, youth were given various training to prepare them into desirable work candidates.

They were trained in financial literacy, gender transformative skills, life skills, entrepreneurial skills, among others. The formed grouped were transformed and registered as YSLAs. Through the groups, youth can save and get affordable loans that may help push their careers.

When Mustafa joined the program, he already knew what skill he wanted to master. Thankfully, masonry was being taught at the outreach centers set up by the program.

“When I told my father about the program, he was happy I decided to learn something. VUKA Program has been a great help in my life.”

After months of trainings, Mustafa and the other 400 plus youths from Mwanza district graduated from the program. Mustafa graduated from his masonry class, he was in a YSLA group, and he was ready to find work.

Though still building his reputation, Mustafa has found work from the friend he used to take food to.

“I am thankful for the VUKA Program for changing my life. I feel confident, I have a skill that I like, and I am enthusiastic.”

## CASE STUDIES

### YOUTH AT THE STEERING WHEEL: TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF SAVINGS GROUPS

Savings groups have become life savers in many countries including Tanzania. An estimated 10 million people, mostly women and young people, participate in some form of savings group worldwide.

Saving Groups is one of Plan International's key interventions in livelihoods in empowering young people economically in addressing unemployment. Through VUKA Project, Plan International in partnership with Social Economic Development Initiative of Tanzania (SEDIT) supported the establishment of 24 Youth Savings and Loans in 4 wards of Nyamagana and Ilemela Districts, Mwanza region.

#### What is a saving group?

A saving group is a small group of 15 to 25 members. These groups have well defined procedures, allow members to make the basic rules around savings and borrowing, and operate in transparent and democratic ways. All of this leads to a secure system that inspires confidence and encourages use of the savings, borrowing and social insurance services offered by the group.

Groups generally operate in about 12 months cycles. At the end of every cycle, the accumulated savings and interest earnings are shared out amongst the membership thus providing useful lump sums to members.

#### Establishment of Youth Savings and Loans Associations

Establishment of Youth Savings and Loans Associations involved the following;



Mobilization of youth into groups in the community



Training of youth groups on financial literacy, life skills and gender



Linking youth to financial institutions

The establishment of Youth Savings and Loans Association in the two districts was very much supported by Local Government Authorities and SEDIT. The Local Governments helped with mobilizing youth into groups followed by awareness creation sessions by SEDIT.

#### Life Skills

Acquiring life skills to deal with enterprise creation and management is another key function that savings groups serve. Discovering new opportunities by analysing local market dynamics, acting on these through planning, knowing how to choose among options, taking smart decisions that minimise risk, and distinguishing one's business from others can be learned through interactive training exercises. These take young people through the process of building small businesses and or use their acquired vocational skills.

#### The Economic Benefits

According to Nestory Mhando, VUKA Project Manager, savings groups have provided a number of modest economic benefits to the youth. He says the implementation of the intervention has provided youth with their first real connection to financial services. It has also provided members with a secure place to save, the opportunity to borrow in small amounts and on flexible terms, and affordable basic insurance services. Nestory is also happy that Savings group membership also had led to increased savings and credit access.

#### The Social Benefits

It would be a mistake to focus exclusively on the economic results of savings groups. VUKA project witnessed members benefit socially as well. Savings groups have helped the youth develop social bonds and foster closer relationships.

Nestory Mhando, VUKA Project Manager reports of observed strengthened social bond among members over time, gained through collective problem solving, sharing advice, learning how to get along better with different personalities, being respectful and listening to others. "We have witnessed youth planning to establish group projects. This is a very good indicator of improved social relations" Explains Nestory

Also, savings groups provided an avenue for the youth to learn other life skills and importance of gender equality in everything that they do as a group and as individuals.

"Savings groups are a perfect platform for dispensing information, training and new opportunities". Says Nestory.

#### Summary

Savings groups are important in empowering youth economically and facilitate their income generating activities. It has allowed the young people who are impoverished and disconnected from financial services to begin building up their savings and increase their assets as they wage a war against poverty. They are bringing communities together – economically, socially, and spiritually – and should be championed for their successes. With no outside capital provided, the savings group model powerfully demonstrates the agency and creative capacity of those living in material poverty.

## A GENDER INTEGRATION APPROACH TO YOUTH ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

### Introduction

Due to various economic and cultural factors, young women from vulnerable and marginalized communities have had limited opportunities to further their lives.

Through the VUKA project, Plan international in partnership with Social Economic Development Initiative of Tanzania (SEDIT) provided gender awareness training to youths, parents/guardians, community leaders, vocational training instructors and employers in the private sector.

### Problem

A survey done by Plan International Tanzania, in Ilemela and Nyamagana showed that as few as 30% of youth respondents completed primary or lower secondary. Considering the implications that cultural practices have on young women from the two districts, women are at a disadvantage compared to their male counterparts.

From the survey, out of 170 unemployed youth which is 52% of the whole number, 60% of them were women

In ensuring active participation of young women in the project, SEDIT's role was to:

- Sensitize youth, community leaders, employers, and parents on equal opportunities for youth
- Identify and train gender mentors
- Develop childcare support services
- Identify, train and support Community Resource Persons

The gender transformative approach adopted by Plan International Tanzania, motivated young women, parents/guardians, spouses, and community to see the importance of both men and women having equal opportunities.

### Implementation

Plan International Tanzania in partnership with SEDIT approached vulnerable youth with the help of community leaders and parents and facilitated the formation of 22 youth led groups. Within the groups the gender transformative approach was implemented as follow:



Gender Awareness Trainings & Mentorship



Young mothers linked to childcare support awareness



Establishment of Vocational Education Training outreach centers close to the beneficiaries

In performing these activities, the project strived to achieve more participation of young women i.e, including young mothers and disabled people in the project.

### Achievements

From the initiatives undertaken by Plan International and SEDIT, the project saw a 55% full participation of young women. Among them were young mothers and disabled women from age 15-24. A total of 400 youths, both young men and women were trained by gender mentors. Beside the youth, parents, spouses, community, and community leaders were also trained on gender awareness. Through the childcare support, 30 young mothers had a place to care for their children while they were in class.

According to Scholastica Kisege, Project Coordinator with SEDIT ;

“The gender awareness being offered by gender mentors in the groups, has trickled down. Youths in the groups are taking initiative to educate their family members. This will in turn educate the whole community. Gender mentors also go to public places, like markets educating the wider public.”

A total of 400 youths, both young men and women were trained by gender mentors.



### Conclusion

Implementing any development initiatives especially in many Tanzanian communities, using a gender transformative approach is key. Not only will it give young women and girls a chance but also an equal chance. Young women from vulnerable and marginalized communities are the most deprived of opportunities compare to young men. Gender awareness and intentionality in providing young women with a sustainable future, brings equity in a community.



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