

# AFRICAN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

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# AFRICAN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (AYEDI)

Implemented by the Bantwana Initiative of World Education, Inc. with the Government of Uganda, local partners, and communities, AYEDI is a four-year project funded by the US Department of Labor, which aimed to reduce hazardous labor and increase decent work among 4,277 out-of-school adolescents living in rural areas in four districts of northern and east-central Uganda.

## REDUCED HAZARDOUS LABOR & INCREASED DECENT WORK

AYEDI addressed factors at individual, family, community, and government levels with influential, involved stakeholders. AYEDI guided adolescent youth through a learning pathway that included exercises and technical trainings focused on self-discovery and adopting a ‘can-do’ attitude while learning life skills, livelihoods, and work-readiness skills that reduced hazardous labor risks and prepared youth to find decent work. AYEDI strengthened family economic resilience, sensitized caregivers to the dangers of hazardous labor, and worked with government and community protection actors to engage communities in child labor prevention, support and mentor young people, and monitor small-scale employers to strengthen compliance with child labor laws.



## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



**90%**

of enrolled AYEDI youth (54% girls) have **graduated from AYEDI**



**82%**

of AYEDI youth are **earning income from decent work**



**90%**

of tested AYEDI youth have **passed accredited, national skills exams**



**90%**

of AYEDI NFE youth have **earned national certificates recognized by industry**



**97%**

of AYEDI youth in saving groups **are actively saving money**

## KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

Anchored in goal setting and career guidance, youth begin the AYEDI pathway through Youth Empowerment Clubs. Clubs helped youth to adopt an entrepreneurial ‘can-do’ mind-set critical to their persistence and success in their chosen livelihood pathway. Life skills linked to personal and livelihood goals improved youth’s communication and decision-making skills, and led to positive shifts in youth’s attitudes and behaviors that, in turn, increased support from caregivers and communities which was critical to their success. Study tours to local businesses exposed youth to market-linked opportunities. Sports and cultural events galvanized youth support and increased youth’s motivation and retention. Information about adolescent sexual and reproductive health, rights and responsibilities, self-care, and hazardous labor dangers also benefited youth. Low-cost Alternative Skills training enabled youth to earn income right away while pursuing training and business goals.

Following clubs, youth entered a livelihoods pathway. Through Integrated Functional Literacy for Youth (IFLY), youth learned modern agricultural skills and basic literacy and business principles while furthering skills in leadership, teamwork, and work-readiness. Post-training business mentorship reinforced business planning skills, financial literacy and linkages with business networks. Under the Non-Formal Education (NFE) Apprenticeship pathway, trained master artisans built youth’s technical and customer service, communication, and marketing skills. Work placements reinforced technical and business skills and further prepared youth to sit for national certificate exams recognized by government and industry. Youth savings groups inculcated a savings culture in youth which they used to support basic needs and invest in business.

Caregiver support was critical to youths’ success. Joint participation by caregivers and youth in savings groups, modern farming activities, kitchen gardens, and other AYEDI activities emphasized family resilience and strengthened caregivers’ support for their children. Caregivers described impressive changes in themselves, their children, and, in turn, their entire households. Hazardous labor sensitization and viable earning alternatives helped caregivers shift away from child labor’s short-term financial rewards and towards longer-term financial goals.

Youth repeatedly emphasized the importance of continuous mentoring and support from business partners, caregivers, government, community members, and other youth as key elements of their success. They attributed their retention and ultimate success to consistent encouragement and care.

Gender mattered. Girls’ responsibilities in the family, especially for teen mothers, influenced their livelihood choices. Mixed gender sessions on menstruation and family planning helped boys/young men take responsibility for their actions and empathize with girls. Girls and boys appreciated information on hazardous labor and occupational safety.

Disengagement from hazardous labor by youth is a process, neither static nor time-bound. WEI/Bantwana’s insistence that all AYEDI youth participate in modern farming and introduction of the Alternative Skills training in clubs ensured that viable, diverse, and safe income-generating options were available to youth quickly. Spreading economic risk by reducing dependence on only one income source appeared to mitigate families’ vulnerability to deeper poverty.

Economic strategies were critical but insufficient strategies to reduce hazardous labor. Child labor sensitization, work readiness and life skills, customer service and financial literacy, mentorship across and beyond the pathway, and, strengthened social supports for youth from peers, caregivers, communities, and local government were also fundamental elements of the project’s success.

*This technical brief is part of a series on the AYEDI project and its pathways. To read the rest of the briefs, a case study, and additional materials about AYEDI, please visit [www.bantwana.org](http://www.bantwana.org).*

# INTEGRATED FUNCTIONAL LITERACY FOR YOUTH (IFLY)

IFLY is part of the African Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (AYEDI), implemented by the Bantwana Initiative of World Education with the Government of Uganda (GoU), local partners, the private sector, and communities. AYEDI aims to reduce hazardous labor and build resilience in 4,277 vulnerable adolescent youth in eastern and northern Uganda. Developed by WEI/Bantwana and the GoU, IFLY tailors and modernizes the GOU’s Functional Adult Literacy program to the specific needs of low literacy adolescent youth seeking decent work in Uganda’s emerging economy.

## WHAT IS IFLY?

IFLY builds financial, basic literacy, and work readiness skills that enable out-of-school adolescent youth to develop decent work livelihoods activities linked to local markets.

Community facilitators train youth in work readiness and basic literacy and numeracy. Business mentors train youth in modern agriculture, provide small seed funds, and coach and mentor youth to manage small businesses for up to six months. Business mentors also link youth to business and government networks for ongoing support and mentorship.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

**90%** of youth have **completed the IFLY pathway**

**100%** of IFLY youth **obtained a certificate in modern agriculture**

**82%** of youth are **earning money from decent work**

## KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

IFLY builds modern agriculture skills, basic financial and literacy skills, and business principles for adolescent youth while strengthening skills in leadership, teamwork, and work readiness. Local agribusiness partners provide training and ongoing mentoring, support business start-up, and help youth establish relationships with suppliers, vendors, and customers. Initially resistant to agriculture, youths’ mindset shifted after seeing the link between modern farming skills and earning potential.

Financial literacy changed the way youth approached saving. Encouragement from IFLY facilitators and local businesses helped youth control spending to meet basic needs and reinvest in their business. Some youth developed group business agreements to encourage saving; others joined AYEDI-supported youth savings groups. Learning to save helped youth contribute regularly to households, and in turn, strengthened relationships with their caregivers.

IFLY youth were divided into small groups, and provided with small seed money to start a group business. Although single business ownership was easier to manage, youth saw the benefits and challenges of teamwork: the group ownership meant more minds to develop plans, share ideas, solve problems, prevent mistakes, expand activities, share responsibilities, and generate more money.



WHAT WE HEARD

Increased knowledge and skills in work readiness and functional literacy



“Training in work readiness was a turning point for me. I learned how to work with and handle customers. Before, I never cared how I talked to a person due to the negative attitude I had around people and work. I now have consistent customers.” –AYEDI Youth

“Our business record is very good, and we refer to it when we review our performance. We learned literacy and numeracy from IFLY, and we can now maintain records ourselves. This is the reason our group is doing well.” –AYEDI Youth

More youth interested in agribusiness and entrepreneurship

“By the end of 2017, I harvested 17 bags of maize ready for the market. I am waiting to sell it when the price is good. AYEDI trained me on crop production and post-harvest management and marketing skills that I use.” –AYEDI Youth



“I make over 120,000 UGX (\$32 USD) daily from my retail business. I travel to different market places practicing the business skills I learned. AYEDI gave me this alternative to quarry work, which was not rewarding and very hectic.” –AYEDI Youth



# YOUTH EMPOWERMENT CLUBS

The Youth Empowerment Club package is part of the African Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (AYEDI), implemented by the Bantwana Initiative of World Education with the Government of Uganda (GoU), local partners, the private sector, and communities. AYEDI aims to reduce hazardous labor and build resilience in 4,277 vulnerable adolescent youth in eastern and northern Uganda. The club package equips adolescent youth with an integrated package of career guidance, goal setting, lifeskills, protection, and communication skills to prepare them to succeed in a training pathway and find decent work in Uganda’s emerging economy.

## WHAT ARE THE CLUBS?

Anchored in goal setting and career guidance, the three-month club package helps adolescent youth develop a “can-do” entrepreneurial mindset, critical thinking, and lifeskills that prepare them for livelihoods training.

Reproductive health, occupational health and safety, and child protection information linked to livelihoods goals help youth avoid common pitfalls that derail longer-term aspirations.

Sports and cultural events motivate and retain youth. Local business study tours inspire and help youth to make informed decisions about their livelihoods pathways.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

**85%** of youth have **completed the club package**

**89%** of youth **improved their leadership scores**

**90%** of youth reported **positive shifts in their mindsets following their club experiences**

## KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

AYEDI tailored the club package to the lives and experiences of youth. Anchored in goal setting and career guidance, Clubs helped youth adopt an entrepreneurial ‘can-do’ mindset which positively shifted attitudes and behaviors by youth towards others, especially their caregivers and other community members. Additional support from caregivers and influential community members strengthened youth’s discipline and resolve to achieve their goals. Youth also learned about the dangers of child labor, and important lifeskills like reproductive health and HIV prevention which helped them avoid situations that could derail their decent work pursuits.

Clubs helped youth develop social assets by strengthening supports from peers, facilitators, caregivers, and the broader community. Topics like adolescent sexual and reproductive health helped youth learn to take better care of themselves and consider the impact of their decisions on their goals. Club strengthened peer support and taught youth leadership and teamwork skills. Sports and cultural competitions integrated into club activities help motivate and retain youth and built community support for the youth.

Regular feedback sessions with youth and other key stakeholders helped to refine and closely tailor the club package to the needs of youth. Feedback resulted in reducing the time youth spent in Clubs to three months, introducing goal setting and career guidance upfront, integrating low-cost alternative skills trainings to help youth earn money quickly and safely, and setting up competitive sports and games to retain youth.



WHAT WE HEARD

Youth started thinking differently about their lives



“I am the kind of person who never respected anyone, not even my parents. It got so bad, my parents chased me away from home because I had become a problem. I did not greet elders nor associate well with my peers. When I joined the AYEDI Club, there was a culture of teamwork, and this helped me cooperate with my other peers. My parents have accepted me back home, I learned to respect elders, and I greet everyone with the respect they deserve.” –AYEDI Youth

Goal setting and life skills helped youth stay focused on their goals

“Being an AYEDI Club leader exposed me to knowledge and practice about what I can do to earn a salary from decent work. I am earning a salary like other educated people and also doing business in the community.” –AYEDI Youth



“The adolescent sexual and reproductive health training helped me decide to abandon the idea of getting married and continue schooling. I now know how to avoid pregnancy and HIV.” –AYEDI Youth



# MARKET-LINKED NON-FORMAL EDUCATION (NFE) APPRENTICESHIP

NFE Apprenticeship is part of the African Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (AYEDI), implemented by the Bantwana Initiative of World Education with the Government of Uganda (GoU), local partners, the private sector, and communities. AYEDI aims to reduce hazardous labor and build resilience in 4,277 vulnerable adolescent youth in eastern and northern Uganda. Developed by WEI/B and GoU, the NFE Apprenticeship competency-based package is tailored to the needs of adolescent youth, is aligned with the GoU’s Skilling Uganda framework, and enables youth to obtain a certificate credential that is recognized by government and business.

## WHAT IS NFE?

The NFE Apprenticeship pathway builds technical and work readiness skills in trades appropriate for adolescent youth. Developed by Bantwana with the Uganda’s Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT), this competence-based, certificate program is recognized by government and industry which increases youths’ competitive advantage in business.

Accredited vocational institutes and vetted Master Artisans train and mentor youth and agree to keep workplaces safe. Youth are placed in one-month post-training internships to strengthen technical and business skills before sitting for the national certificate exam.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

**97%** of youth **completed the NFE Apprenticeship pathway**

**85%** of NFE youth **are earning money from decent work**

**90%** of youth **passed the DIT national examination**

## KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

The internship or placement component of the NFE Apprenticeship reinforced technical and business skills in trades appropriate and decent for adolescents. Those skills strengthened youths’ competency and likelihood of passing the Directorate of Industrial Training national certificate exam.

Youth reported that learning customer service, communication, marketing and networking skills were critical to their success. Work readiness skills like dependability, quality service delivery, honesty, and customer respect were also highly valued by youth.

By linking the NFE Apprenticeship to the national framework for Skilling Youth and Directorate of Training career ladder, youth were well positioned to expand their skills and work opportunities in the future.



WHAT WE HEARD

Increased importance of diversified livelihoods through alternative skills

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“I worked at a small craft shop selling shoes from skills I learned in AYEDI’s alternative skills class. My brother had a different small shop so I also joined him and his business. I was able to use the profits for capital to start a hairdressing business.

I balance my work well, during day I do hairdressing and later in the evening, I sell shoes. I always buy more hair things to keep my business running whenever I get a profit from either business.” –AYEDI Youth

More disciplined and cooperative youth

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“When you started going through the AYEDI project, they became more disciplined. Many youth in the area smoke or abuse drugs. But when you compare AYEDI youth to the rest, you see their more positive behavior. They are cooperative, start businesses together, and work as a team. They recognize that they have learned many skills, and they now know what they can do with them.” –AYEDI Community Development Officer



# YOUTH SAVINGS CLUBS

Youth Savings Clubs are part of the African Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (AYEDI), implemented by the Bantwana Initiative of World Education with the Government of Uganda (GoU), local partners, the private sector, and communities. AYEDI aims to reduce hazardous labor and build resilience in 4,277 vulnerable adolescent youth in eastern and northern Uganda. Savings Clubs inculcate a culture of savings in youth, build financial literacy, leadership and team work skills, and strengthen youth’s resolve and discipline to save and invest in decent work activities.

## WHAT IS YOUTH VSLA?

Youth participated in youth-only and mixed youth/adults savings groups. Ugandan law prohibits youth from taking out loans, so youth-only clubs are linked to and secured by adult savings groups so they can benefit from higher interest generated from adult users.

Youth learned to save and build financial literacy, teamwork, and leadership skills. Caregivers and youth appreciated both models for their positive influence on savings, youth responsibility, and, improvements in household economic resiliency.

Youth faced challenges with saving groups. Urban migration, household and family responsibilities resulted in youth drop out.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

**97%** of youth in VSLAs **were actively saving each month**

**100%** of youth savings **come from decent work activities**

**90%** of youth **were retained in clubs for a full savings cycle**

## KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

Developing a saving culture among adolescent youth is critical to better financial management in life and work. Youth-only groups enabled youth to learn and save with their peers, without the scrutiny of adults. Members reported increased savings discipline, reduced spending on unnecessary items, and, increased motivation to work towards their business goals. Youth members also benefited from increased self-respect and admiration from peers, caregivers and communities.

Youth savings groups also built leadership and teamwork skills and helped youth learn how to manage conflict and solve problems in groups. Youth also learned record keeping and financial literacy. Youth reported that these skills were equally important to their success in work and life as the financial savings itself.

Mixed youth/adult savings groups enabled youth to learn with their caregivers and address family resource allocation plans together. Youth savings group participation also positively impacted youth’s relationship with their caregivers. Youth report that they feel more appreciated, supported and respected by their caregivers now that they are able to contribute to household expenses.

Though girls and boys participated in savings groups, most youth believed that girls had more discipline to save than boys, who could be more easily influenced by negative peer pressure to engage in sports betting or other distracting activities, Teen mothers faced special challenges due to time constraints and additional family responsibilities. To be successful, adolescent savings groups must be tailored to individual and family contexts.

Decent work refers to work that is safe, productive, and delivers a fair income and takes place under conditions that uphold human rights, dignity and country labor laws

WHAT WE HEARD

Increased motivation to save

“Saving has helped me because AYEDI first educated us on how to save and why we have to save. I take responsibility to borrow and use the money for my business. I make sure that I return it with interest. I have a small shop, but saving has helped me maintain it.” –AYEDI Youth

Before joining [the savings club], I used to just sit idly or move around with my friend doing nothing the whole day but now I have to work hard to get money for savings in the club.” –AYEDI Youth

Improved savings discipline and business expansion

“Before joining the club, I used to spend my money on things like buying chapatti and sodas for eating and drinking but now I first consider what to add in my salon, my weekly savings and spend only some of the profits.” –AYEDI Youth

“The savings has helped me a lot in expanding my business and even to start up a new income generating activity in the form of poultry in addition to my shoe selling business.” –AYEDI Youth





# CAREGIVER VILLAGE SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATIONS (VSLA)

Caregiver Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) are part of the African Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (AYEDI), implemented by the Bantwana Initiative of World Education with the Government of Uganda (GoU), local partners, the private sector, and communities. AYEDI aims to reduce hazardous labor and build resilience in 4,277 vulnerable adolescent youth in eastern and northern Uganda. VSLAs help to address the economic drivers of hazardous labor while building financial literacy and small business skills and strengthening social supports. AYEDI also used VSLAs as platforms (VSLA+) to sensitize caregivers to the dangers of hazardous labor.

## WHAT IS A VSLA?

VSLAs help caregivers to address the economic drivers of child labor by encouraging savings, building financial literacy skills and business planning. AYEDI also uses VSLAs to sensitize caregivers about the dangers of hazardous labor.

AYEDI's structured, step-by-step VSLA approach helps caregivers understand and adhere to key principles of savings and borrowing.

Caregivers report that they are motivated and encouraged by other members to save and invest and are proud that they are better able to support their children's basic needs.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

**97%** of caregivers in VSLAs were actively saving each month

**100%** of caregivers in VSLAs initiated or expanded income generating activities

**100%** of caregivers in VSLAs know about the dangers of child labor

**92%** of caregivers in VSLAs meet at least three of their children's basic needs

## KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

VSLAs strengthened financial literacy skills that were linked to livelihoods goals and sensitized caregivers to the dangers of hazardous labor. Caregivers reported that basic skills like budgeting, managing debts, negotiation skills, and basic market analysis were also important benefits of AYEDI's VSLA package.

Through VSLAs, caregivers were able to save, access loans, and establish income-generating activities that strengthened their families economically.

Caregivers also appreciated sensitization sessions on the dangers of hazardous labor which motivated VSLA members actively participate in child labor and other child protection sensitization activities in their communities.

WHAT WE HEARD

Established financial safety net and strengthened resilience



“I have been depending on agriculture for money to meet the basic needs for my family. However, these harvests are seasonal and hard to rely on. Because of this, most of my children could not go to school, as there was no source of income. Even during the proper seasons, the yields could be poor due to a lack of money to procure inputs like pesticides. Now I can access the emergency fund from the VSLA for urgent needs, like scholastic materials. I can also borrow for other activities like agriculture and then pay back the VSLA later.” –AYEDI Caregiver

Accumulated savings improved household income



“My mother was a VSLA member, and she also had her personal business. She encouraged me to save and could support me financially. At times, I could support her in her business. But as my savings accumulated in the VSLA group, I have accessed a loan, and I have also started my personal business. This has increased on our family income. I am now able to work under convenient conditions, I am supported by my mother, and I am also able to take care of my child’s basic needs like clothes and medication.” –AYEDI Youth



# COMMUNITY CHILD LABOUR COMMITTEES (CCLC)

Community Child Labor Committees (CCLCs) are part of the African Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (AYEDI), implemented by the Bantwana Initiative of World Education with the Government of Uganda (GoU), local partners, the private sector, and communities. AYEDI aims to reduce hazardous labor and build resilience in 4,277 vulnerable adolescent youth in eastern and northern Uganda. Skilling community resource persons already active in child protection work in communities and linking CCLCs with local structures strengthens existing systems and anchors child labor in broader child protection dialogues and community action.

## WHAT IS CCLC?

CCLCs are made up of community resource persons already active in community child protection activities that are trained by AYEDI to prevent and respond to child labor issues.

CCLCs collaborate closely with local government to strengthen child labor sensitization and follow up on child labor issues in families.

CCLCs also help government to monitor and improve adherence to hazardous labor laws small scale businesses and work with communities and government to pass by laws to improve conditions in hazardous labor ‘hotspots.’

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

**100%** of CCLCs targeted by AYEDI were revitalized

**100%** of CCLCs were engaged in identifying or following child labor cases

**81%** of CCLCs were engaged in community child labor sensitization activities

## KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

As members of existing local structures , CCLC were embedded in broader community child protection efforts. CCLCs bridged the gap between community and child protection structures at the community level, enabling better follow-up of child labor cases.

Close working relationships with government on community sensitization and child labor compliance monitoring of small scale employers helped to reduce communities’ acceptance of child labor practices.

As volunteers, CCLCs were often challenged to balance their volunteer work with their business and family obligations To incentivize and sustain CCLC participation, AYEDI encouraged CCLCs to join savings groups. CCLCs appreciated access to savings groups and used savings groups meeting to sensitize caregivers about child labor issues, CCLCs were also motivated by their own education around child labor and the positive changes they witnessed in adolescents’ lives.



WHAT WE HEARD

Helped members handle child labor cases



“The community members are responsive to child labor messages, and they use the VSLA platform to disseminate information and gather issues affecting children for follow-up action. One community member goes to the group not to save but rather to get information and share child protection issues.” –CCLC Member

Conducted necessary interventions to prevent or respond to child-related issues

Due to their influence in the community, CCLC members often intervene with parents on behalf of children. In one case, a 15-year-old girl asked a CCLC member to convince her mother to support her school costs, “My mother has neglected me. She is not providing for my school fees and clothing. I am in class 7 in primary school. I dig in people’s garden to raise money for school fees and my uniform so that I can continue with my education, but my mother takes away the money and promises that she will pay me back.” Together, the CCLC and the girl persuaded the mother to reallocate household expenses so that she can now support the child’s education.



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Cover photo: Youth AYEDI beneficiaries caring for their sunflower garden.

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