

NEWS



Building Healthy Communities

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Embracing STEM Education



The strides made in STEM in the last decades have opened enormous opportunities and challenges in the world, redefining development across the globe. Unfortunately, for communities in rural Uganda like in Nebbi, the lack of access or general exposure to **STEM** Education from a tender age has put a lid of limitation on the potentials of an otherwise, incredibly talented generation. For most of these children, the only world they know is the rural communities where they live.

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EDU CHILD FOUNDATION UGANDA

OUR STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS



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LETTER

END OF YEAR PUBLICATION - 2021



EDU CHILD FOUNDATION UGANDA

Raising An Empowered Generation

FINISHING STRONG



In 2020, we saw that when a dreadful event like a pandemic happens—with escalating crises of health, economics, social norms, and injustice—everyone gets on board to find emergency response. However, 2021 has taught us that what happens after a crisis can be harder to deal with, as the fatigue of new realities sets in. Living with the long haul of COVID has taken its toll, and, in many ways, 2021 has demanded more from us. It's been a test of endurance for many.

No one could predict the many twists and turns Covid-19 brought to nations, communities, families, and workplaces all over the world. As the year started, we had many hopes, top on the list was the return of all our kids to school. Unfortunately, the reality of the pandemic around the world kept the children in Uganda locked in their homes. It has been almost two complete years without most of these children stepping foot at school. As we move in the rural areas of Nebbi, where we serve, it hurts to find many children, especially young girls who have given up on education. For all of us around the world, we have had the challenge to either get swallowed or rise above the countless waves of destruction that remained constant at pursuing us throughout the year.

As **Dan Green** Puts it;

"Regardless of what came before or what has yet to come, what matters most right now is how I choose to respond to the challenge before me. Will I lie down, or will I fight? The choice is mine, and I choose to FINISH STRONG."

Picturing ourselves STRONG at the finish line by the middle of the year might have not even crossed our minds at the time. The one thing that we have learned is; things won't always go the way we plan them, so we must be ready to adjust to maintain momentum. Maybe we didn't meet every expectation we had set for the year, but there are still many reasons to celebrate. In the words of Robin Sharma; *"Starting Strong is good. Finishing strong is EPIC."*

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New Normal - Embracing STEM Education



The strides made in STEM in the last decades have opened enormous opportunities and challenges in the world, redefining development across the globe. Unfortunately, for communities in Rural Uganda like in Nebbi, the lack of access or general exposure to STEM Education from a tender age has put a lid of limitation on the potentials of an otherwise, incredibly talented generation. For most of these children, the only world they know is the rural communities where they live.

We are very excited about a new partnership with the Atomic Toads, a team of young enthusiastic children in the USA that are guided by Parent Coaches and Mentors to develop STEM skills and practice engineering principles, while realizing the value of Teamwork, Gracious Professionalism, innovation, and Cooperation. The Atomic Toads are also part of the First Tech Challenge robotics competition.

Through the partnership secured with the Atomic Toads in 2021, Edu Child Foundation Uganda has been granted some funds enough to secure 8 laptops to help launch a Computer Training Center in the heart of Nebbi District to serve children from the rural communities in which it operates. Knowing that this Computer Training Center (CTC) initiative will give the rising generation from the rural communities we serve; access to a world which they have never imagined exists; leaves us forever grateful to our new friends and partners who are supporting us so that we can afford these children, and hundreds of other rising stars from these communities, started on the path of catching with the rapidly evolving world of STEM Education.

Because of this partnership, on December 12th, 2021, a team consisting of 12 children under our care, had the first interactive learning opportunity with the Atomic Toads team in the USA. Our kids got the opportunity to interact with and be inspired by their peers in the United States to embrace STEM via a zoom call. In turn, our kids shared their experiences; how school is like here and some of the challenges they have to overcome in order to stay in school. We believe this was the first of many such interactions between the kids in the USA and our kids. And with the launching of our Computer Training Center in January 2022, our kids are going to have hands-on interactions with computer and get exposed into the world of science and technology. This kind of interaction is opening doors for our kids to relate, and connect with worlds beyond their confines. Sharon, one of the kids who participated in this call said, "I am now dreaming bigger and preparing to take on the world."



We believe that IT and STEM Education provides unlimited access to information, economic and social resources that are needed by all people in the world. ECFUG – is convinced that providing access to IT skills, will empower its beneficiaries from the communities served with key knowledge and skills to make effective decisions, open wide learning and employment opportunities, and also build capacity to use STEM within their rural community contexts for fostering both personal and community development.

Once again, we are so grateful to our amazing and generous partners who have made the rebooting of the CTC Initiative possible. We are forever grateful.

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Every year, Edu Child implements robust community development programs in a bid to realize holistic transformation of the communities we serve in Nebbi District (Goli, Pawong, Ayomo and Jupangira Parishes); one among which is the *"Building Healthy Communities Program,"* that is aimed at promoting sustainable community health practices that contribute to healthy living, reduction of preventable, communicable diseases, and restore copying mechanism of the affected members of the communities we serve. Through Building Healthy Communities Program, Edu Child Foundation Uganda is scaling up efforts in promoting healthy living by supporting expanded access to comprehensive prevention, care, treatment and support services for children, women, and families affected, with special focus on the vulnerable rural communities with a high burden of disease and/or low coverage.

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An EMOTER, nurse administering a vaccine on a young teenage girl at Koch Awinga ground during the medical camp in April, 2021.

A look at 2021 Medical Camps



Nebbi district where we serve, has got only 24 health facilities (both public and private) and these serve, according to Uganda Bureau of Statistics population projection 2020, a population of 282,600 documented people. The very communities we serve are even more vulnerable as they struggle to access medical care especially, based on the fact that many, have to walk long distance to find a health center to seek medical help. In 2021, we stood by our commitment to continue organizing at least three medical camps to help reach out to the unserved and underserved communities we work in.

Through our existing partnership with **Essential Medical Outreach and Treatment Rescue (EMOTER)**, a medical outreach initiative based in Uganda; in 2021, Edu Child Foundation Uganda successfully organized and executed four (4) successful Medical camps in the communities of Pawong Parish, Ayomo Parish, Jupangira Parish, Koch Awinga, Okeyo, Erusi, and Oweko.

From the medical camps, a total of 7,000 people received free medical services, such as vaccination/immunization services for children, women and girls, essential medical consultations and treatment, general blood tests, HIV tests, Malaria treatment, among others. Throughout the activity implementation, we liaised with the Nebbi District local leadership, community volunteers, village health teams (VHTs), local councilors and council chairpersons; to ensure effective community mobilization and stakeholders' buy-in and participation.

With everything that is happening in the world right now, we are very grateful to have facilitated these medical camps amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

We appreciate our host community centers in each of the parishes we served; the Nebbi District Local Government leadership, the village health teams, local radio stations, religious leaders, and our field awesome community volunteers who put in extraordinary energy in mobilizing the communities. And most of all, the **EMOTER** team that worked so hard in serving each and every one who showed up, seeking for medical help during these camps. We are so glad that; as the year came to an end, we were able to implement this activity. We are looking forward to more of the same in 2022.

Have you ever felt super excited about the start of a thing, but as time went on your excitement (and motivation) started to fade? Well, because of the many challenges we encountered this year, we reached a point where there was a standstill and we wanted to push everything to 2022. At that point it occurred to us that we had the power to decide to **FINISH STRONG**, regardless of all that seemed not to work. This defining moment changed our course, and led us to work harder and do more than we initially thought we could.

The most prominent thing we did was to decide **NOT** to delay the future. Amidst all the feeling to procrastinate certain activities to 2022, we determined that there are some things that didn't have to wait until next year. We asked ourselves; what are we putting off that we can be acting on now? This led us to revamp all aspects of our different programs. We got new team on our staff, resumed tree planting in the communities we serve, figured creative ways to still meet with the members of the communities we serve to carry out our advocacy activities, revamped our character development training programs with the kids, and many more. We ended up being so busy and doing so much to impact the communities in the last quarter of the year than we had even thought was possible.



It was clear that there was no better or perfect time than the one we had. We all have extreme strength within us; we just don't usually see it because it comes out only in extreme circumstances. But we must admit that finishing strong is not for the faint of heart. It's a serious trait for those who desire more than they see.

Mark Twain once said;

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So, throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

We are glad we do not have to play the wish game now as we wind up the year. We are grateful that we rose above the storms we faced – be it the pandemic, the limitations in resources, human resource related challenges, among others.

There's no competitor in a race that sees the finish line and slows down. They all finish strong! We are finishing the year with as much excitement as we started with. We are finishing the year stronger and with our heads lifted up, **NOT** looped tails.



It was March 12th 2020; a normal day like others. All school going children spent the day in school – learning, playing with friends, dealing with challenges of the day, and so it was for every other person in Uganda. Our day seemed normal like any other. The night came, and shortly after dinner we all went to bed to get some really good sleep for the day. We did not know what awaited us the day after.

Waking up in the morning, it was March 13, 2020, and mistakenly turning on the news, we find a new storyline which stated that the Ugandan government had abruptly closed schools and colleges nationwide in response to COVID-19. Well, that immediately meant that the education of over 15 million learners countrywide were at stake. The succeeding days saw complete shutdown of the country being enacted. Unfortunately, the social and economic costs resulting from this announcement were not borne evenly, especially for the rural and marginalized learners. This was especially the case for girls in rural, and marginalized communities in the country, like in Nebbi – where we serve.

At some point as the pandemic continued terrorizing the world, we thought all will quickly settle down. Unfortunately, the dance continued throughout 2020 and extended till the end of 2021. While COVID-19 affected nearly all learners globally, school closures exacerbated already existing inequalities for marginalized learners and came with a host of unintended consequences for vulnerable rural children most especially the girls. Many learners globally adjusted to online learning or technology-mediated learning on TV, radio, ed-tech apps, and mobile phones. While such learning could take place in urban areas, for many children in remote villages, this wasn't the case as learning mediated through ed-tech remained out of reach for many disadvantaged children due to connectivity challenges, including the lack of access to electricity and household poverty.

Just as we did in 2020, we continued in 2021 to provide hard copies of learning materials as per the government curriculum, to the vulnerable rural children in our areas of operation, and more specifically, those under our direct care. We were able to deliver these learning materials in the form of Homework Packages to every household in which all the children under our care dwell, with instructions on how to use them to ensure the children, especially the vulnerable rural girls stay focused on their education.



Supporting these rural children with the home-based learning materials reinforced their zeal for continuing with education to have a fighting chance in life; strengthening their resolve to compete with the rest of the children who have had access to online and other ed-tech learning for the 2 years of school closure in the country.

After two years of staying home as the pandemic reached its peak, a number of children, especially those in rural communities, lost hope of returning to school, most notably are the vulnerable teenage rural girls. Staying home exposed them to more threats of sexual harassment and abuses, and promiscuity. This has costed so many their chance to return to school as a number of young teenage girls became victims of early marriage and early pregnancy. On a sad note, 3 teenage girls supported by Edu Child Foundation Uganda also fell prey to the same evil, becoming pregnant at as young as 15 years old.

However, we are grateful that as the year ends, the government of Uganda has directed official reopening of all schools in the country effective January 10th, 2022, giving green light to many students across the country to report back to school after two years of staying home without stepping foot in school due to the pandemic. We are glad that finally, we will see all the students enrolled under the Educate A Child Program, return to school.



We thank all the exceptional partners who have continued supporting our efforts to educate many vulnerable rural children, especially young girls in rural Nebbi District where we operate; through prayers, giving of resources and sharing of wisdom on how best to actualize them. We are forever grateful.



The world is home to more than 1.1 billion girls under age 18, who are poised to become the largest generation of female leaders, entrepreneurs, and change-makers the world has ever seen. On December 19, 2011, United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 66/170 - declaring October 11 as **the International Day of the Girl Child**, to recognize girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world. The International Day of the Girl Child focuses attention on the need to address the challenges girls face and to promote girls' empowerment and the fulfillment of their human rights.

World over, progress for adolescent girls has not kept pace with the realities they face today, and COVID-19 has reinforced many of these gaps, especially in rural communities. This year, the day was commemorated under the theme, "Digital generation. Our generation," acknowledging the growing digital world and its impact on the gender gaps. We seized the opportunity to be inspired by what adolescent girls see as the change they want, the solutions - big and small.



Through the Girl Arise Program (GAP), Edu Child Foundation Uganda, organized a special celebration event in the community of Pawong Parish, Jupangira Sub-County, Nebbi District to highlight the need for collective involvement of community members in empowering the girl child to thrive. As we reflected on the theme for the day, "Digital generation. Our generation," it is worth noting that, there has been a massive worldwide shift to online teaching and learning during school lockdowns since 2020 when the COVID-19 outbreak ravaged the world. However, as this digital learning is being highly encouraged and embraced around the world, including in many low-income countries, including rural communities; the rural children, including girls, have been out of school due to a lack of access to digital learning solutions; which has had very serious implications for the ability of millions of girls in these rural communities such as those we serve in Nebbi to access quality education online.

Edu Child Foundation Uganda is committed to empowering rural girls from the communities we serve, to move from dreaming to achieving; ensure more are attending and completing school; fewer getting married or becoming mothers while still children, and more gaining the skills they need to excel in the future world of work. Our hope is to see GIRLS breaking boundaries and barriers posed by stereotypes and exclusion, including those directed at children living in marginalized rural communities.



We are grateful to all the Sub- County and district key officials, religious leaders, cultural leaders, local council chairs and counselors, educationists, our community champions, our program beneficiaries, our incredible staff, the media, and many other key stakeholders that showed up to grace this occasion. We thank all the women in leadership within Jupangira Sub- County who shared their hearts with so much passion to inspire us to each rise up and play our parts in empowering the girl child in our midst to thrive.



Promoting Menstrual Hygiene

A group of 37 girls in November, 2021 were coached on how to practice healthy Menstrual hygiene by Edu Child Staff. These were each supplied with a package of re-usable pads. They were also mentored on how to handle girl-boy relationships, and be aware how to handle advances from old men who want to manipulate them. In brief they were helped to protect themselves and others girls against violence, abuse and/or rights violation. Our staff are continuing to teach girls in the rural communities we serve in Nebbi District about their rights through interactive activities during our weekly Girl Arise Program. Throughout the 2021 #16DaysOfActivism our efforts were geared towards enriching girls in the communities with key knowledge and understanding about their rights so that they can become vocal against, resist and report any attempts to have them coerced into early marriage and any other forms of abuse and violence that are common to girls in the rural communities of Nebbi District.

CLIMATE CHANGE



We are playing our part by Planting Trees

"If you cut trees, plant more for tomorrow - for the future generations which are coming."

This nursery school rhyme carries a lot of wisdom that can be applied by the old and young. And this year, we did just that. Throughout the last quarter, every weekend, we participated in TREE PLANTING with community members and the kids under our care within the communities of Jupangira Sub-county where we serve. Our first tree planting exercise was graced by members of the Jupangira Royal family.

Through the Climate Change Adaptation Program (CCAP) we are strengthening the capacities of rural communities in Nebbi District to reduce their vulnerability to climate change effects. We believe that addressing climate change impacts in rural communities (grass-roots level) through awareness-raising on its impact and collective community involvement in forging resilience is one step towards achieving sustainable development in the communities we serve.

As a result, a major part of Edu Child Foundation Uganda's work to protect and conserve the environment is Tree Planting. We are committed to working with the vulnerable rural communities to instill understanding of the long-term, potentially negative consequences of environmental degradation and to engage them in sustainable natural resource management programs.



Harambee – Serving our Communities

Harambee is a Swahili term for Synergy. Under our initiative to build healthy communities, Edu Child regularly organizes community service days (Harambee), to clean homes and other dwelling spaces as a way of promoting good sanitation and hygiene. In the last quarter of the year, we were in Goli community helping in cleaning up the homestead of an elderly woman. Through Harambee, we involve our staff, our sponsored children along with their parents/guardians, and stakeholders of communities served in general cleanliness of the entire spaces identified – clearing bushy compound, removing trashes, plus sweeping and mopping the spaces, wherever applicable. The combined efforts of everyone involved make the work so easy. At the climax of these cleaning exercises, we usually share some porridge together.

We constantly engage our beneficiaries and communities served in the practice of healthy living habits; demonstrating by example, the importance of maintaining good hygiene and sanitation as a way of healthy living and preventing communicable diseases from affecting the communities.

These activities do not only teach our children and those we serve, responsibility towards their community, but also has over the years instilled a strong belief in our beneficiaries that, they too have something to offer – using their time and energy towards positively building their communities. It is always one of our best ways to end the month.

iNSPIRE Youth Program Highlight



With the relaxation of restrictions on sports this year, our soccer team, Keno Hot Stars FC slowly started activating all sports activities, restoring livelihood of a lot of young men we reach out to through the soccer club under the iNSPIRE Youth Program. Having been fully registered with the Federation of Uganda Football Association (FUFA) in 2020, this year our team participated in the FUFA regional league for the first time, an exciting opportunity of its kind.

Discipleship Program

The world we live in today is marred by so much promiscuity and without guidance, children can waste their precious lives. Through our Discipleship Program for the rural kids under our care, the children are taught various life-transforming discipleship lessons every week by our Project Field Officers.



The Discipleship Space under the Educate a Child Program remains a special part of our mentorship programs for all the children who benefit from the Education Sponsorship Program. Each weekend, Project Field Officers spend time connecting with the kids, equipping them with high moral, social, personal and spiritual traits to help them mature into great men and women of integrity. The children learn about how much God loves them, and are taught that they are never alone in life. This instills in them a sense of self-confidence, strengthening their belief system. The impact of this message on a vulnerable child's life is huge! Edu Child Foundation Uganda, through this program, continues to engage the children through training, to inspire higher character formation and leadership competence aimed at empowering them to stand out as fearless positive catalysts for the transformation of their communities.



Besides the children always find time to play hard and connect with each other and they build a strong bond of social connection with one another.



Peer Coaching



In line with our Discipleship Program for the kids, another approach we have adopted is peer coaching as we have come to appreciate that the peers are the greatest influencers of behavior, skills, attitudes and values.

Because of this, a group of 12 children was coached and mentored on how to lead, manage and inspire others in study, communication and social skills. As a result, these peers coaches discovered that they have much potential in influencing others in positive ways. The 12 peer coaches have been very instrumental in leading and guiding other kids every weekend that we meet to engage them in the discipleship program.

IMPACT STORIES



Rovia Nyamungu

Rovia is a teenage girl who has struggled with being in a very un-supportive family and community environment. As a result, she had poor social skills, low self-esteem which would always trigger uncalled-for anger in her. As we look back Rovia was able to voice her own personal change during our feedback meeting after several self-esteem and self-confidence coaching sessions. She said After several one-on-one coaching with our Staff, she is able to manage her temper. For long she felt she was worthless but for

some reasons, she has realized lately that she has very high self-esteem and social skills. Rovia now participates in our peer coaching sessions as a Peer Coach.

Fabien has been a victim of psychological, and verbal abuse inflicted on her by relatives, parents and her community. Unlike all her elder and younger sisters who conformed to the community pressure of child marriage practices; she Fabien became very unpopular at home and in the community because of her passion for staying in school to complete her studies. Her father who saw no value in her education chose to spend his income on alcohol. As a result, Fabien has had to sell food items during market days on weekends in order to raise money for her immediate personal needs. Fabien, just like all other children is grateful that Edu Child has given her a loving family she has not had, and has restored her hope for a brighter through meeting the cost of her education. Additionally, the continued coaching sessions with our staff have inspired more hope and faith to achieve her educational goals. She feels alive again.



Fabien Afoyorwoth

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NEWS



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END OF YEAR PUBLICATION

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(In-charge Child Support)



Gloria Tekakwo (Volunteer)
(In-charge Women Support)

Become Our Partner

As we close this year, we want to extend our sincere gratitude to all the special partners who joined hands with in the course of the year, and those who have continued to stand with us over the years, empowering us to implement our various programs aimed at improving the quality of lives of those we serve. Edu Child Foundation Uganda has had consistent fast-paced growth of programs and teams in the last four years and we attribute this to the generosity of all the wonderful people who have selflessly loved on us and supported us.

We still have so much room for growth and want to kindly extend our invitation to more compassionate people who have been inspired by our work and appreciate our vision, to join us and be a part of this journey. Any donation will support Edu Child Foundation Uganda's vital work of ensuring children, women and vulnerable youth in Uganda have access to at least the most basic human rights: education, clean water, food, health care, and economic opportunities. You can donate to us directly through our website: www.ecfug.org OR contact us through our details on the side for tax deductible donations or other partnership options.

ECFUG is listed among the best performing organizations in Uganda by Uganda NGO Bureau under Ministry of Internal Affairs and gets audited annually. Every fund go towards supporting our efforts in helping the poor, and is accounted for.



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