

Report



January – March 2020

Don't count the days, make the days count.

Muhammad Ali

As 2020 is upon us, we resolve to strengthen our efforts to continue offering services to deaf beneficiaries, their families and communities; We acknowledge achievements made over the years as testament of DLU's determination to provide opportunities for the deaf; We embrace challenges encountered as a source of motivation that renew our spirits and commitment to our Mission and Vision. Deaf Link Uganda is deeply indebted to individuals and organisations who support our work, ensuring that Deaf people lead dignified, meaningful and productive lives. Your generosity, understanding and contributions are investments that steer us towards a future that recognizes the Deaf as invaluable members of society.

January began with hosting visitors from Sweden and Estonia: YMCA – Heby and YMCA Tallinn – Estonia, who arrived on 02nd January for two-week's visit to DLU. The visit highlighted our strong partnership, providing insight into the organisation's services to the deaf, their families and communities. After a vibrant and warm welcome, DLU staff and guests travelled to Eastern Uganda where most programmes are implemented under DLU-Eastern. During the week's visit to the



region, guests met and interacted with beneficiaries, their families and local communities who expressed joy as they shared personal experiences about the impact of DLU's intervention services on their lives. In-depth reflections of visitor's experiences in documentary at: www.deaflinkuganda.org or [DLU's YouTube Channel](#).

[Guest Arrival - Entebbe Airport.](#)

Meetings with beneficiaries were interactive and informative, offering unique learning experiences as well as a taste of indigenous Ateso traditions and cuisines! Access to beneficiaries' homes was by *boda-boda* (motorcycle taxis) penetrating remote villages and giving visitors an understanding of environments in which DLU operates its programme activities.



I didn't know that our small work could help that many people; and when I saw that they're taking care of each other, I had a very good feeling that I could do something good that could help many people.
Habib Achour (Chairman, YMCA – Heby)

Snapshots from Visit



a) Stopover: Ngora Town; (b) Touring Nyero Rock; (c) Visit to beneficiary's home in Atoot village

In 2019 DLU consolidated most of its activities to Eastern Uganda under **DLU-Eastern** operating in Ngora, Kumi and Bukedea districts. Despite lack of statistics to provide information about the deaf, the region has high incidences of deafness yet lags behind in intervention and development programmes for deaf people in Uganda. In the First Quarter, we continued our programmes in Education, Livelihoods, Microfinance, Deaf Rights & Advocacy, working in partnership with deaf beneficiaries and their families, especially those that are most vulnerable. The impact of our work is evident through empowered deaf individuals, strong family units and communities with greater awareness and appreciation of deaf people. Despite challenges, our close interaction and understanding of grassroots communities, DLU's visibility has increased. Our achievements have been made possible by the generosity of our donors who provide financial and moral support, a dedicated staff team, families of the deaf and our beneficiaries' remarkable determination to overcome difficulties.

In February we convened a staff and beneficiaries meeting in DLU-Eastern where forty-five beneficiaries met to analyse activities of the previous year and plan 2020.

EDUCATION: The programme has provided sponsorship to disadvantaged deaf and hard of hearing children since 2012, giving them opportunities to education and skills development in formal and non-formal settings. Initially, we began with fifteen children who over the years have completed their education. In 2019 we had five students in secondary level education. This year the number of sponsored students increased by two with new sponsors coming on board. Using a holistic approach to ensure the overall growth and welfare of the deaf child, DLU staff closely monitor and follow up students' educational progress through school and home visits. These activities strengthen our intervention and relationships with schools for the deaf and families of beneficiaries. We endeavour to contribute to

deaf-friendly environments where deaf children thrive and develop self-esteem. Furthermore, we continue to support parents to improve communication and reduce language barriers within their families.

New beneficiaries received sponsorship at Ngora School for and Deaf (NSD) and Wakiso Secondary School for the Deaf (WSSD) respectively and were visited during School Visits to follow up progress and ensure that they'd settled in well at school.



School Visits at Ngora School for the Deaf & Wakiso Secondary School for the Deaf

Among our outstanding achievements is the enrollment of Ismail Mutumba into **Higher Education** at Michelangelo College of Creative Arts, Kisubi for a two-years



Diploma in Graphics and Communication Design. Last year, Ismail successfully completed his “A” **Levels** at Wakiso Secondary School for the Deaf, leaving behind a legacy of excellence, noted the Headteacher: *“Ismail is specially gifted and will be remembered by his teachers and peers for his hard work, discipline and great sense of humor!”*

DLU Staff with Ismail at the Office

He’s emerging as a role model for deaf and hearing peers alike. DLU staff gave him a delightful send-off to begin a new phase in his life.

Please watch DLU’s documentary on Education: *Against Odds – Educating the Deaf*: www.deafinkuganda.org

LIVELIHOODS: The economic empowerment of deaf individuals and their families is key to securing sustainable livelihoods. Therefore, the programme goal is to create and promote employment opportunities. We donate Start Up kits to skilled deaf youth to begin businesses of their own choice, ensuring economic and social productivity necessary for independent living. DLU's established two Groups: Deaf Business Groups (DBGs) and Parents' Business Groups (PBGs) organised according to a individuals' economic interests and abilities. We set up income generating activities in: Tailoring & Fashion Design, Weaving & Knitting, Carpentry, Farming and Agriculture. During a period of one to two years, beneficiaries receive resources (i.e. farm animals & poultry, seeds & pesticides, carpentry tools, tailoring/weaving resources, etc.) and technical assistance such as, free training and marketing to improve the quality of their products. As care-givers, parents of the deaf actively participate in these activities to boost the economic welfare of their deaf child and increase income for the unit. This strategy has strengthened bonds between the deaf and their hearing family members as well as increased awareness about deaf people's abilities in their communities. We ensure that no one is excluded from benefiting from this intervention. Results are evident in increased and diverse sources of income among families of the deaf, highlighting their economic and social empowerment and creating opportunities to market their products. The programme has gone further to ensure that deaf beneficiaries pass on their skills to their peers as **'Trainers of the Deaf'** in the Apprenticeship Project:

Akello, former beneficiary in the Education Programme was sponsored to study Tailoring & Fashion Design at Apoolo Na Angor Institute - Bukedea. In 2017 after completing her course, DLU set up her up to start a business by providing her with tailoring equipment and related resources. Akello has since thrived to become a successful entrepreneur! Last year she became a Trainer of the Deaf, taking on a deaf apprentice and earning additional income to expand her business in Kachinga village - Ngora District. Her business includes: making new clothing, mending and selling second-hand clothes which she purchases from local district markets.



At the end of this year, Akello will exit from DLU programmes through a Transition Phase aimed for Independent Living. In preparation for this phase, she had the opportunity to undertake a three-weeks internship in Kampala (1st – 23 March, 2020) to sharpen her training skills and increase exposure to the business. During her internship, she learnt to produce various fashion designs and products, explored the business environment and toured Kampala's tailoring hubs to increase awareness of the industry: *It was a transforming experience that gave me opportunities to produce*

new items, such as school uniforms and making Vaseline. It increased my self-esteem and confidence – an extraordinary learning experience! Akello noted during an interview on the impact of the Internship:

Pre-internship Preparations – Kumi.



February 2020: DLU staff meet Akello to outline details of the internship.

Over the years, Akello has sharpened her skills and now earns an income from her business. During follow up visits by the regional Programmes Officer, she's closely monitored to evaluate progress and address challenges that may arise. Akello is a vital resource, trainer of the Deaf and role model!

DLU Office: Intern's Orientation

Conducted by Catherine (Finance Manager), the orientation exercise provided detailed information about internship procedures, activities timetable, Dos & Don'ts, Health and Safety tips (within and outside the host's home) and programme expectations. Ms. Rose Namusisi, an accomplished tailor and mother of a deaf child was introduced to Akello as her trainer and host at her residence in Kazo, a Kampala suburb. The intern would learn to make various products, explore places of interest in Kampala's tailoring hub and gain insight into possibilities for expansion.



Exploring Kampala's downtown business district, Akello interacted with several business people and learnt about the tailoring industry. At the end of her internship, she'd made various products including: fashion dresses, handbags, aprons, skirts, blouses and three types of school uniforms. She also learnt to

make Vaseline using a mixture of natural ingredients. Her host was impressed by her enthusiasm to learn and adapt to new environments: She's a *hardworking and self-motivated woman who completes given tasks on time!* When she first arrived at my home, she started teaching us Sign Language to ease communication! Akello is flexible and great fun to work with. My family and I learnt a lot from her and bonded very well during this time! **Rosemary Namusisi** – Tailor & Trainer



Products made by Akello: Handbags, rucksacks, school uniform

Parents Business Groups (PBG) aim to promote economic welfare of families of deaf children in rural areas. In October 2019 two deaf children (new beneficiaries) in Bukedea district received two sheep each (male & female), while one received three turkeys to rear for income. Each child's parents were given the responsibility of ensuring positive outcomes from donated animals. In March 2020 DLU recorded an increased number in sheep and turkeys, resulting in improved livelihoods and economic welfare for families of deaf children.

DEAF RIGHTS & ADVOCACY focuses on the Rights of Deaf people: promoting their rights and inclusion in mainstream development programmes, raising awareness about deafness and working in partnership with national and international Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs). Among activities organised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) is **World Hearing Day** a global event held each year on 3rd March to raise awareness about hearing loss, prevention of deafness, ear and hearing care. DLU was invited by "Hear His Voice Uganda" to participate at this year's event held at Makerere University Hospital. The event's theme: "**Hearing for Life. Don't let hearing loss limit you**" brought together medical personnel (ENT surgeons, audiologists and Speech & Language therapists),



Audiologist tests hearing loss; Dr. Ndolerire Head of ENT Department Makerere University Hospital gives a speech about medical advancements in ENT.

Non-government organisations for Persons with hearing loss, parents/families of the deaf, teachers, deaf & hard of hearing people and well-wishers. Key presenters shared personal experiences and discussions on medical developments in Ear & Hearing Care with information on up-to-date progress. As one of the guest speakers, I had the opportunity to share personal experiences of growing up with a hearing loss. “With a population of 45 million people, Uganda has only 49 ENT surgeons and about nine public ENT centers.”¹ Nevertheless, there’s an increase in medical personnel, facilities and services that include screening of hearing loss in new born babies, advanced technologies like hearing aids, cochlear implantation surgeries, etc. WHO emphasized the importance of timely and effective interventions to reduce deafness and increase health services for persons with hearing loss. At DLU Office in Tufnell Drive (Kamwokya), we held the 1st staff meeting with invited guest Thomas Kyokuhare, Country Director for **Action on Disability & Development**² (ADD). Furthermore, in endeavouring to expand local fundraising initiatives, various businesses in Kampala host our Donation Boxes.



March 18, 2020: Staff meeting with guest & Delivery of Donation Boxes

¹ Information shared by an ENT surgeon and published in the New Vision March 4, 2020

² Action on Disability & Development: <https://www.add.org.uk/countries/uganda>

This Quarter we raised Ugx. 245,000/-! In recognition of our host enterprises, DLU awarded Certificates of Appreciation and T-shirts in expression of our gratitude.



Our hosts: Let's Do Coffee, Aristoc Bookstore, Capital Shoppers & Capital Forex Bureau

The end of the *Quarter* brought a shocking and dramatic change to our way of life with the Corona Virus outbreak declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO). On 31st March 2020 the government of Uganda enforced a national Lockdown and night curfew as a preventive measure to curb the spread of Corona. With restricted movements, except for medical emergencies and few “Essential Services,” like all other organisations and businesses, DLU’s activities came to a halt with the presidential *Work at Home – Stay at Home* decree.

Covid – 19 & The Deaf: Communities all over the world are experiencing the destructive effects of the deadly Corona virus that continues to claim thousands of lives, resulting in untold misery. The impact of this pandemic on our health, social, economic and cultural wellbeing is devastating. For Deaf people (a marginalised minority), the threat posed by Corona has severe implications on livelihoods of the people we serve, as deafness compounds and heightens risks of infection, thus intensifying the suffering of this unique population. Majority of deaf people are illiterate and cannot access vital information via mainstream media (i.e. television, radio, print and social media, incidental communication, etc.); **language and communication** barriers result in lack of awareness about the virus and preventative measures. Many deaf people have fallen **victims of violence and aggression** by law enforcement units during Lockdown and curfew. With **poverty rampant** amongst the deaf, many cannot sustain their lives during this crisis and remain excluded from obtaining government emergency food supplies.

The **closure of schools** all over the country resulted in loss of education for deaf children, equally marginalised in the government’s national intervention that shifted learning to media (i.e. television, radio, social media and distribution of print educational materials) - none of which are accessible to the deaf. This has severe implications on deaf children’s mental growth, hampering learning and

development. Being out of school has resulted in feelings of neglect and lack of motivation that can trigger dropping out of school as a result of stagnation, yet it is extremely important to retain deaf children's mental agility through appropriate stimulation during this Covid – 19 crisis.

As gradual easing of Lockdown comes into effect, **wearing of masks** will be enforced all over the country, this is complex dilemma that requires special consideration in regards to deaf people: Sign Language, a visual mode of communication, combines complex grammatical structures, gestures, facial and body language to communicate and convey information. It is paramount, therefore that the face is in full view – the paradox here lies in the use of masks to prevent infection which puts deaf people at high risks on all levels. Urgency in response to this dilemma is required in all intervention plans, including all special minorities such as the Deaf as we battle to fight against Covid – 19. The uniqueness of Deaf people clearly stands out to challenge our efforts and commitment to equalize services for all citizens during these troubling times.

Written by:



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