

REPORT

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January – September 2021



Do not wait; the time will never be "just right." Start where you stand, and work with whatever tools you may have at your command, and better tools will be found as you go along.

Napoleon Hill

From the Director's Desk:

March 2021 marked one year since Uganda, like many other countries, underwent a new experience: "Lockdowns" which came into existence to halt the rapid spread and devastating impact of the Covid-19 (C-19). Implications of the pandemic on nations and livelihoods are diverse; none has been spared the painful experiences that have affected our existence, social, economic, educational, cultural and political wellbeing. Majority of Persons with Disabilities are excluded and confined to the fridges of government C-19 response services. As we gradually shook off the 2020 pandemic horrors, 2021 seemed to bounce us back into "normality;" when schools re-opening, Deaf Link Uganda (DLU) resumed its activities in earnest.

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Despite the challenges, we endeavoured to expand our intervention services, reaching out to a larger deaf population. The number of sponsored children increased, while self-employed deaf individuals who had lost jobs and suffered the economic impact of C-19 received startup capital. Our 2020 initiative: *DLU Covid-19 Response: Deaf People at the forefront* gained momentum with provision of humanitarian support, especially to those living in urban areas and facing food shortages. In March through our strengthened networks, we organised an Art workshop for Deaf artists, a major highlight at the beginning of the year! To highlight experiences of deaf people during the pandemic, we formed a partnership with Disability in Wales and Africa (DWA) that resulted in a series of documentaries of deaf people in the **Tell Your Story** Project.

Midyear, Uganda was hit by the deadlier C-19 Delta variant, resulting in high fatalities; the nation was plunged into a second lockdown ordered by the president on 18 June 2021 – yet again, we rolled back into another cycle of helplessness, fear and uncertainty with immediate closure of educational institutions, businesses, social and religious activities. During the two months' lockdown, programmes went on hold. The government began vaccination programmes, albeit at slow pace, majority of deaf people remain excluded from obtaining vaccines due to language and communication barriers.

Achievements have been possible through financial support from donors, partners and friends, whose commitment ensures the organisation's continuity. It's a privilege to serve with a supportive Board of Directors, a dedicated staff team and volunteers during these difficult times. The generosity of friends contributes to building an inclusive Uganda that enable Deaf people thrive and utilize their potentials to lead productive, meaningful and dignified lives.

September 2021

2021 ACTIVITIES

DLU's activities continue under three programmes to ensure access to education, economic, social and cultural opportunities to deaf persons:

- I. Education;
 - a) Sponsorship (formal & technical skills training);
 - b) School & Home Visits.
- II. Business Enterprise;
 - a) Micro-credit
 - b) Deaf Development Project (DDP)
 - c) DLU Savings & Credit Cooperative Society (DLU-SACCO)
- III. Livelihoods
 - a) Humanitarian Assistance
 - b) Parents Business Groups (PBG)

Deaf Rights & Advocacy a crosscutting activity undertaken in all programmes above strengthens DLU's networks with national and international partners, combining efforts to raise the profile of deaf people, improve their welfare and raising awareness about deafness.

I. EDUCATION:

Educating the Deaf is key to powering future generations of individuals equipped with knowledge and meaningful skills for independent living.

Sponsorship: School disruption due to lockdowns is creating a crisis that is hampering the educational welfare of deaf learners, increasing their vulnerability. Confined at home where most families are unable to communicate in sign language intensifies isolation and exposes many to mental health problems. Majority of deaf children (especially girls) may never return to school, a dangerous scenario that increases risks to sexual violence, abuse and dependency.

2021 began with high hopes as schools re-opened after nearly a year's lockdown. In continuing sponsorship for deaf children from disadvantaged backgrounds, we increased the number of supported deaf learners to six. 13-year-old Akilo ([photo](#)) a new beneficiary continued primary four education at Ngora School for the Deaf. The first child of three children born to deaf parents, Akilo's education had been terminated by her parents after the 2020 lockdown. Unable to afford her fees, they withdrew her from school because her father, a self-employed carpenter, closed his workshop due to economic hardships. Escorted by DLU staff, Akilo joyfully returned to school on 1st March 2021. Like her parents, she was extremely delighted



with the support. In April, staff visited the two sponsored children at the school to follow up their educational progress and general welfare. Furthermore, despite the disruptions, one of our students took her “O” Level national exams at Mbale School for the Deaf, completing a crucial level of education. Having prepared intently in the midst of challenges (including lack of access to multi-media), her hard work and perseverance are commendable. Other students continued their education in respective schools.

Education of the Deaf in Crisis: *The nearly two years of school lockdown have had a destructive impact on deaf learners, rolling back years of achievement in their lives. Their unique learning needs have not been addressed by the Ministry of Education, leaving them excluded and dis-empowered. Majority in rural areas have no access to on-going digital alternatives in education, resulting in high dropout levels.*

Lockdown II in June compounded the education crisis that worsened a desperate situation for deaf learners. To address these challenges, DLU stepped up its home-based activities, keeping learners engaged in income generating initiatives. Monitoring visits have been ongoing to support families and re-assure learners of our commitment to their welfare, especially because many are prone to psychological and mental health problems due language deprivation, communication and isolation within their homes. Staff interact with the deaf and their families, providing counseling when need arises.

School & Home Visits: To ensure the overall wellbeing of students, DLU conducts school and home visits to follow up their progress at home and school, keeping close contact with school administrations, teachers and parents. Close engagement with families enables us understand their dynamics to provide appropriate support; interactions create a forum that strengthen family bonds. Visits are opportunities to address issues concerning the child during school terms and holidays. DLU home based support include livestock, poultry, farming and agricultural tools. Besides consumption, benefits of homegrown food reduce expenditure and are sustainable source of income for the youth in addition to equipping them with farming skills. **Photo:** Home visit in Jjeza – Mpigi district.



Home visits: Following up progress of beneficiaries' agriculture & farming activities.

During a visit to Kampungu village in Gomba, a parent commented proudly about his deaf son's resourcefulness in the family's coffee farm: He is so *industrious and helpful. He is innovative unlike his hearing siblings; you don't have to tell him to undertake any chore: show him once and he takes on the job by himself without supervision. He's a valuable member of the family and am so proud of him!*

Internship Training is provided to students who express interest in acquiring additional skills.



19-year-old Okurut was overjoyed when schools re-opened after a year's lockdown - he was disturbed by the second lockdown: *During last year's lockdown, DLU placed me with a Deaf carpenter in my village, Orapada (Kumi district) to acquire carpentry skills. When schools re-opened this year, it was for a brief period! The pandemic has disrupted my education! Long stay at home is demoralizing and isolating. Even though I continued home based farming & agricultural activities, I wanted to resume carpentry training. In August, DLU came to my home proposing that I do an internship in Kampala! My parents and I were excited! In August, I travelled to Kampala for a four months' internship with a skilled Deaf carpenter. I've learnt a lot which is better than staying at home; I'm learning carpentry and business skills and gaining great exposure. Thanks to DLU for this exceptional opportunity!* **Photo:** Internship orientation - DLU office

Okurut James has been a beneficiary of sponsorship since 2012 when he began his primary education at Ngora School for the Deaf. In 2019, he enrolled at Mbale School for the Deaf for a two-year course in Welding and Metal Fabrication.



Okurut during training at his instructor's workshop in Salaama, Kampala. Instructor's comments: He's a *hardworking student and enthusiastic. He was able to make furniture for sell within a short time!*

II. BUSINESS ENTERPRISE:

Deaf Business Group (DBG) previously under the Livelihoods Programme was changed to Business Enterprise a programme aimed at economic empowerment of the deaf. Support includes start-up capital, micro-credit loans, skills training and apprenticeship. Self-employed individuals affected by C-19 received support to revive their businesses, while for others, training was provided.

a) Micro-credit

This support is vital for the deaf because many are excluded from mainstream microfinance services. Therefore, eligible self-employed individuals received small loans to boost their business.

Nakisaka (inset photo), an industrious retail shop owner abandoned her shop in Tula, Kawempe (Kampala) when she failed to raise capital to buy stock. In 2019, she got a job at a biscuit factory nearby, but when the pandemic broke out, she lost her job. Without any source of income, she became destitute and dependent on others for survival. In July, hope was restored when she successfully secured a DLU micro-credit loan of Ugx 500,000/- which revived her business. With potential for growth, her business is thriving. Nakisaka employs a deaf shop assistant – extending economic support to her peers.



DLU undertakes interviews and also visits to business premises during assessment



Nakisaka receives loan; visit to her shop with empty shelves; shop re-stocked after loan!

b) Deaf Development Project (DDP)

This project provides start-up capital, training and business resources to eligible individuals. During the pandemic, majority of deaf people with small & medium enterprises lost their livelihoods. Many were exposed to poverty and exploitation. DDP was initiated to create economic opportunities for the deaf:

▪ Startup Capital

(a) Ssebatta, father of five, is a skilled carpenter making quality furniture for homes and offices. In 2000, he began work at Uganda School for the Deaf as an instructor in carpentry. For twenty years he trained and mentored deaf children; many started their own workshops after school. For additional income, he set up his own business Ssebatta Furniture in 2011. His excellent skills attracted many customers, enabling him expand his business; he continued training and passing on skills to young deaf children, as well as employing deaf carpenters. Besides carpentry, he's a self-taught free-lance photographer and farmer, which earns him extra income. C-19 seriously affected his business, as restrictions on movements cut off his customers from the school premises. To abide by government regulations on movement within the school, he was terminated and requested to move his workshop! Paralysed by these events, he approached DLU to discuss challenges of expulsion from school and the impact on his livelihood. Due to the urgency of the

matter, Ssebatta applied for emergency business support to enable him relocate and build a new carpentry workshop at his home in Salaama – Kampala.



DLU staff hands over support to Ssebatta, followed by a visit to his new workshop one month later.

Skilled beneficiaries are required to give back to DLU by passing on their skills and knowledge to peers through internship training. As above, Ssebatta is undertaking an internship, training a DLU student in carpentry; he's role models and resourceful individual who remains actively involved in the organisation's activities to promote entrepreneurship among the deaf: *"When DLU was established 14years ago, I was among its first volunteers. Over the years I've benefitted from its programmes and feel delighted to contribute to its activities! Training Okurut is enjoyable as he's a hardworking and humble student with great potentials."*

(b) Nabbosa Cleophasi decided to improve on her family's income by starting a Fruits & Vegetable stall at her home in Kisugu. "This supplements my husband's meagre income during this difficult time when our survival is threatened." Nabbosa has a one-year-old son and had never worked before. DLU assessed her eligibility and supported her with a Startup capital of Ugx 100,000/= She also participated in the **Tell Your Story project** (documenting experiences of Deaf people during the pandemic).

▪ **Business Support:**

Services to self-employed individuals in need of economic support: When DLU-Eastern regional activities were on hold due to the second lockdown; beneficiaries working from home were not affected by restrictions on movement. Akwi Agnes, a skilled weaver (using a handloom donated by DLU) continued her work. Programmes Officer (Okello Sam) visited o follow up her progress: *"I commend Akwi for her hard work. Despite an accident in which she injured her foot, she is determined to work to complete customers' orders. During lockdown, she made twenty scarves! Large scarves are sold Ugx 45,000/- and provide a good source of income. She received knitting thread to increase her productivity. Akwi makes high quality products that attract many customers in her locality (Mukura – Eastern Uganda) as well as Kampala!"*

Photo: Akwi displays her products.



▪ Training & Skills Development

Deaf youth are given opportunities to increase their capacities, expand income avenues, network and interact with professionals in various fields. In March, DLU organised a three days Modern Batik Art (Level 1) workshop in partnership with Ugandan German Cultural Society/Goethe-Zentrum Kampala (UGCS/GZK). Seven Deaf artists participated in the workshop to acquire skills in a new technique of using wax and dyes to design patterns on fabric. Taught by David Kibuuka, brainchild of the idea, the workshop was highly interactive and vibrant. It increased the Artists' self-confidence and expanded their horizons. Television networks Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) and Spark TV aired the event, publicized on DLU's social media platforms. The East African (a regional weekly newspaper) wrote an article entitled: ¹*Ugandan Deaf artists find their voice in Modern Batik Painting* published (May 8 – Mat 14, 2021). The workshop resulted in greater awareness about the youths' potentials and importance of improving their skills.



Modern Batik Art: Artists at work during the workshop – applying wax and dyes on fabric.

One of the artists, Deus Barugahare, was invited to participate in an Art Competition organised by Alliance Française Kampala and Goethe Zentrum Kampala. The competition, comprising of six hearing artists, was to paint a Mural. Deus' 1.2m x 2.4m mural, entitled "One to Watch" took him



3 days to complete. It was the first experience for him to paint on a large wall: *It was a privilege working alongside other talented artists. My artwork will remain on the walls the German/French center for years – it's a landmark achievement for which am thankful to DLU that enabled my participation!* Barugahare

Voting for the best artist was held during the French German Art & Culture week in May with the public invited to choose their best artist. DLU attended the event with other Deaf artists, creating an interactive forum between the deaf and hearing.

¹ <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/magazine/modern-batik-classes-allow-deaf-artists-to-voice-their-plight-3392460>

III LIVELIHOODS

Improving livelihoods of the deaf, their families and communities is key to DLU's services, as families play an important role in the welfare of their child. Our collaboration with them increases possibilities of creating inclusive home environments that value deaf children. Although the deaf are our primary beneficiaries, DLU supports the entire family, providing services through **Parents Business Groups (PBG)** and **Humanitarian assistance** to improve the socio-economic status and wellbeing of the family, especially those living in rural areas.

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a) Parents Business Groups (PBG)

In 2013, DLU began supporting families of the deaf in rural Eastern Uganda by providing donations in kind (i.e., livestock, poultry, farming tools, etc.) given to families as income generating opportunities. Using a rotating system, each family received three turkeys or sheep. After a two years period, new families of the deaf are identified to receive support. Previous beneficiaries return animals/poultry for distribution to fresh applicants. PBG has benefited many families.

Osion Village, Kumi:



23-years-old Apoo Jennifer was born deaf. Although she's never attended school, she's skilled in farming & agriculture. In 2018, Apoo was among the four PBG beneficiaries who received three turkeys each. During the two-year project (2018-2020), she worked hard to increase the number of turkeys; this year returned five turkeys to DLU for donation another family of a deaf child. The project increased her family's income: their turkeys multiplied from 3 to 22 within a short period. They decided to sell off some turkeys and upgraded to livestock. They now have three cows! PBG has improved the welfare of many families. Apoo is in charge of the project, supported by her parents and grandparents who commend her work: *"We're proud of Apoo - she's the star of our family and has brought us wealth!"* says grandmother (in photo with Apoo).

Fifteen families have benefited from PBG with six new beneficiaries. DLU provides free training in turkey rearing, drugs and mentoring support. The project connects parents of the deaf, enables them interact and share experiences and challenges. Friendships formed and wealth creation have a positive impact that increases appreciation of their deaf children as valuable family members!



Aug 2021: Hand over in Madoch village (Kumi): Deaf children receive turkeys and sheep

Table below shows how the project has progressed over the years.

PBG: Turkeys & Sheep Rearing Project in Rural Eastern Uganda

FAMILY	ASSET DISTRIBUTED	YEAR 1 (2018)	YEAR 3 (2021)	Remarks
Family 1	Turkeys	3	19	Sold turkeys and upgraded to cattle
	Sheep	2	8	
	Cows	0	1	
Family 2	Turkeys	3	11	Struggling due to animal disease.
Family 3	Turkeys	3	16	One sheep pregnant
	Sheep	0	4	
Family 4	Turkeys	3	14	Sold turkeys and upgraded to cattle
	Cows	0	3	

PBG BENEFITS:

- i. PBG donations translate into quick assets that are converted into cash or exchange for other farm animals. This means that support to families of the deaf is very helpful in meeting immediate and long-term financial needs;
- ii. The project leads to improved attitudes and positive image towards the deaf (previously considered a worthless dependant). The deaf person is a source of assets and wealth necessary to alleviate poverty and is important for the family's wellbeing;
- iii. The project is an indicator of a Culture of Saving (i.e. use of farm animals as non-monetary assets) to improve livelihoods among families of the deaf;
- iv. Small donations of poultry and/or farm animals are crucial to the wellbeing in African families for they result in social and economic empowerment. Savings is crucial in enabling families gain economic independence to meet their needs;

- v. Skills learnt during the two-years revolving project are vital for increased competencies in farming and management skills;
- vi. Social cohesion formed among families enable them become stronger advocates of the Deaf as they share, experiences, knowledge and information;
- vii. PBG increases visibility of the Deaf within their families and communities as valuable, productive and dignified individuals with skills and knowledge to share.

b) Humanitarian Assistance

Extended to the deaf, their families and communities, including interactive meetings to raise awareness on issues affecting the deaf in society. Donations such as, food relief, clothing, farming tools, furniture, etc. are given.



Activities: Family meeting; donations to families of the deaf; PBG pre-handover meeting

When the pandemic broke, DLU began supporting deaf people affected by lockdowns in Uganda through provision of food relief: **DLU's C-19 Response: *Deaf People at the Forefront***. As restrictions continue to affect livelihoods, many deaf people have lost jobs and are excluded in government C-19 Response programmes. To reach out to this minority, we re-defined our work to remain relevant during these difficult times. Working with volunteers in food distribution activities (especially in urban areas). Deaf people have been mobilized to receive donations; in total, 81 individuals have benefited. Although this support is short term, it makes a huge difference to livelihoods. Below are distribution activities: 17 carpenters in Kyebando, 27 deaf employees at ²Hariss International (Riham) and Biplous Uganda Limited.



Humanitarian support: C-19 food distribution to the deaf

² Hariss international is a foods and beverages company; Biplous Uganda Limited is a leading producer of furniture in Uganda. The two sister companies employ a total of 27 deaf people

PARTNERSHIPS

Advocating the rights of deaf people during the pandemic led to new partnerships with Ugandan German Cultural Society/Goethe Zentrum – Kampala, who are funding activities related to Arts & Culture, promoting skills development among Deaf youth. Lack of information about disabled persons' experiences during the pandemic has resulted in their exclusion, increasing vulnerability, exploitation, neglect and abuse. Disabilities in Wales & Africa (DWA) collaborated with DLU to document unique challenges faced by deaf people. Using video, we collected footage of personal experiences of seven Deaf individuals for the **Tell You Story (TYS)** project and produced short documentaries to highlight the negative impact of the pandemic on their lives, providing insight of their isolation and victimisation. Although many are trying to overcome these challenges, there are long-term effects on livelihoods, and most especially on the educational welfare of deaf learners. The pandemic has rolled back years of progress made in various areas of Deaf people's welfare. *Documentaries are available on DLU's³ website and YouTube channel.*

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Deaf People's Survey: Due to lack of data on the deaf, DLU undertook pilot surveys in three regions: Kampala, Gomba and Kyegegwa districts to obtain information on the deaf and their experiences during the pandemic. Surveys were done by a deaf person and in total sixty deaf individuals (20 in each region) participated. Short term needs included food supplies, while long-term needs were related to employment (i.e. startup capital) and support for skills training. The surveys will lead to interface meetings with participants to support formation of Deaf Communities with shared experiences. The survey reveals the need to address challenges affecting deaf people during the pandemic, as well as problems of isolation, violence, lack of access to information (i.e. on Covid-19 and vaccination, etc.), language and communication barriers.

OUR DONORS:

DLU's commitment to promote the welfare of deaf people in Uganda is possible through donations from Friends and Partners, who continue to support our work. This support has made a significant difference to the lives of the deaf, their families and communities since the founding of DLU in 2007. Your generosity drives forward our mission and vision. The financial contributions received are invaluable and make a meaningful impact in the lives of the Deaf. We are indebted to our Partners and with special thanks, extend gratitude to you for your generosity over the years of DLU's services. Thanks to our Board of Directors, staff, families and communities.

In recognition of our donors and individual friends (who wish to remain anonymous), DLU extends special thanks to the following for the continued financial support over the years:

³ www.deaflinkuganda.org

Stewardship Giving Services (UK); KFUK-KFUM (YMCA/YWCA) Bromma, Södra (Sweden); InterAction – Sweden; KFUM – Heby (Sweden); Anna & Friends (Sweden), Y's Men's Club International – Järfälla (Sweden); Indoor Energy AB – Sweden and Ugandan German Cultural Society/ Goethe Zentrum Kampala (UGCS/GZK).

Thank you for remain close to this CAUSE! For enabling and believing in our work!
To each one of you, we are extremely grateful!

THANK YOU from all of Us!



DLU-Eastern (PBG): Handover of turkeys & sheep in Madoch village, Kumi district

REPORT WRITTEN BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nassozi B. Kiyaga', is written over a light blue grid background.

Nassozi B. Kiyaga
Executive Director

DATE: 31 October 2021