

FROM HAZARDOUS LABOR TO DECENT WORK

A CASE STUDY



KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS FROM
THE AFRICAN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT
AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Cover photo:

AYEDI youth, Franka, proudly shared her earnings ledger from the small produce business she started following support from AYEDI.

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Back photo:

A mother and her daughter work together harvesting oranges and carrots in the backyard garden that strengthens food security for the entire family.

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About the Bantwana Initiative of World Education, Inc.

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The Bantwana Initiative of World Education, Inc. (WEI/Bantwana) was launched in 2006 to address the comprehensive needs of children and families made vulnerable by HIV and other adversities.

Using evidence to inform innovative programming models, WEI/Bantwana harnesses and strengthens the talents, creativity, and commitment of communities, governments, and other partners to develop innovative models of care that build family resilience and wellbeing.

Working closely with government, WEI/Bantwana strengthens health and social welfare delivery systems by working with actors from community to national levels to improve capacity, coordination, and delivery of integrated, high-quality services.

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African Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (AYEDI)

Launched in 2014, AYEDI is a four-year project implemented by the Bantwana Initiative of World Education, Inc. aimed to reduce hazardous labor and increase decent work among 4,277 out-of-school adolescent youth living in rural areas in four districts of northern and east-central Uganda.

WEI/Bantwana implements AYEDI in partnership with the Government of Uganda, local partners, and communities. Local partners include Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans, Straight Talk Foundation, and RECO Industries. Local business partners include Acholi Private Sector Development Company, African Development and Empowerment Center, African Trainers and Entrepreneurs Forum, and the Gulu Farmers Association.

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ACRONYMS LIST

ASRH	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
APSEDEC	Acholi Private Sector Development Company
ATEFO	African Trainers and Entrepreneurs Forum
AYEDI	African Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative
CCLC	Community Child Labour Committee
CDO	Community Development Officer
CRP	Community Resource Person
DIT	Directorate of Industrial Training
FA	Field Assistant
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoU	Government of Uganda
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IFLY	Integrated Functional Literacy for Youth
IGA	Income Generating Activity
JFFS	Junior Farmer Field School
KII	Key Informant Interview
MoE	Ministry of Education
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
NFE	Non-Formal Education
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
SSBG	Secondary School Block Grant
UGAPRIVI	Uganda Association of Private Vocational Institutions
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WEI/Bantwana	The Bantwana Initiative of World Education, Inc.
YEC	Youth Empowerment Club

OVERVIEW

“Joining the AYEDI club was a turning point for me. [They] emphasized how to work as a team and have friends. Before joining, I viewed everyone as a threat, especially the men. I learned how to interact with others and work together. I have not had to go back to working in bars and lodges. I now have patience for achieving my goals.”

– AYEDI adolescent girl

These sentiments represent the views echoed by adolescent youth participants in the African Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (AYEDI). The impact youth described extends far beyond decent work¹ income earning opportunities to changes in their views of themselves, their relationships with caregivers, the positions they hold in their communities, and the goals and expectations they have for their lives.

Implemented by the Bantwana Initiative of World Education, Inc. (WEI/Bantwana) with the Government of Uganda (GoU), local partners, and communities from 2014 – 2018, AYEDI is a four-year project funded by the US Department of Labor (USDOL), which aimed to reduce hazardous labor and increase decent work among 4,277 out-of-school adolescent youth living in rural areas in four districts of northern and east-central Uganda.

Recognizing that engagement in hazardous work is a complex phenomenon with implications on individual and systemic levels, the AYEDI pathway model addressed factors at individual, family, community, and government levels with influential, involved stakeholders. AYEDI guided adolescent youth through exercises and technical trainings that enabled self-discovery while learning life skills, livelihoods, and work-readiness skills that reduced hazardous labor risks and prepared youth to find decent work in their local communities.

¹ Defined by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as work that does not violate child or hazardous labor laws and maintains human rights and dignity in the workplace.

To address the ‘push’ factor of family poverty and to leverage caregiver influence in family decision-making, AYEDI strengthened family economic resilience and raised caregiver awareness of hazardous labor. AYEDI worked with government and community protection actors to raise awareness about the dangers of child labor, support and mentor young people, and directly engage small-scale employers to increase their compliance with child labor laws.

Throughout the project cycle, AYEDI collected qualitative and quantitative data from adolescent youth, their caregivers and families, communities, private sector partners, and local government partners to measure progress and refine programming interventions to respond to identified gaps. This refinement process played an important role in the success of the project.



4,277 out-of-school adolescents have gained skills to earn income from safer, more decent work.

After four years of operation, key project results include:

- 82% of enrolled AYEDI youth (54% girls) have graduated from AYEDI.
- 80% of AYEDI youth are earning income from decent work.
- 90% of tested AYEDI youth have passed accredited, national skills exams.
- 97% of AYEDI youth in savings groups are actively saving.
- 92% of caregivers in savings groups are able to meet at least three basic needs of their children.

While these data provide strong evidence of the project’s success, WEI/Bantwana commissioned a small qualitative research study to examine the key factors that contributed to the achievement of the youth. Using focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs), WEI/Bantwana interviewed 37 AYEDI youth, 24 caregivers, and 10 additional stakeholders (See Annex I: Methodology).

KEY RESULTS

82%
of enrolled AYEDI youth
GRADUATED
from the program.

80% of AYEDI youth are
earning a living from
DECENT WORK.

92%
of caregivers in savings
groups report they’re
able to meet at least
THREE BASIC NEEDS
of their children.

97% of AYEDI youth in
savings groups are
SAVING MONEY.

THE AYEDI PATHWAY MODEL

IDENTIFICATION AND ENROLLMENT

Youth were identified and referred to the project by community resource persons, service organizations, caregivers, and the youth themselves. Once identified, recruited, and enrolled, adolescents entered the AYEDI pathway through community-based Youth Empowerment Clubs (YECs).

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT CLUBS

Informed by global and programming evidence, WEI/Bantwana tailored the club package to the specific needs of out-of-school adolescent youth. Delivered by trained community facilitators over a period of three months, clubs encouraged youth to reflect on their lives and identify their own strengths as part of a process of identifying their livelihoods goals and pathway selections.

Youth learned foundational life skills, including adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH), how to protect themselves from violence and neglect,

the dangers of hazardous labor, leadership skills, and occupational health and safety.

Club facilitators focused on self-discovery and a “can-do” entrepreneurial mind-set as key components of the club package. Topics were sequenced to build on one another and linked to the personal and professional goals that the youth had set for themselves from the outset. They encouraged critical thinking and leadership skills that built the self-esteem, self-confidence, decision-making abilities, relational skills, and self-care practices of the youth.

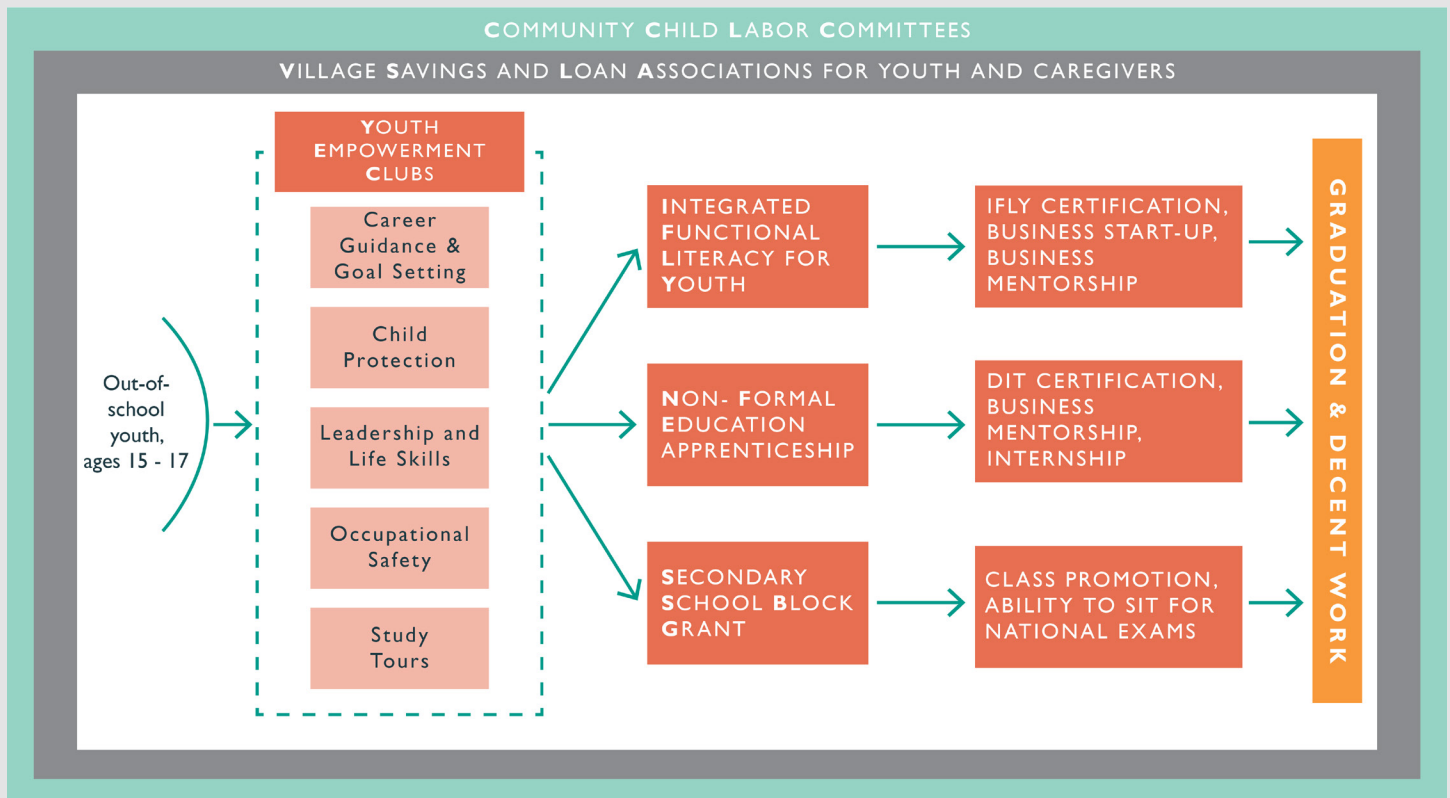
Local business study tours inspired youth and helped them to make informed decisions about livelihood pathways. Sports and cultural events helped retain youth, and community service opportunities motivated youth, galvanized community support, and promoted positive images of out-of-school youth.

Upon completion of the club curriculum, youth entered one of three tracks: the Integrated Functional Literacy for Youth (IFLY) program, a Non-Formal Education (NFE) Apprenticeship, or the Secondary School Block Grant (SSBG) package.²

² The Secondary School Block Grant (SSBG) supported a small group of eligible youth to stay in school. AYEDI clubs were set up in school for AYEDI SSBG youth and open to the broader school community. Trained teachers offered career guidance. Due to the very small cohort of AYEDI youth supported by the SSBG, this case study did not examine this pathway.

MODEL

Youth enter the AYEDI pathway through Youth Empowerment Clubs that prepare them to select and succeed in their livelihoods pathways.



INTEGRATED FUNCTIONAL LITERACY FOR YOUTH

Adapted from Uganda’s functional adult literacy program, the IFLY package built foundational entrepreneurship, agribusiness, financial literacy, and work-readiness skills. AYEDI youth were trained in modern agricultural skills using the Junior Farmer Field School (JFFS) methodology. Local business partners trained and coached youth to start up and manage group livelihood and business activities, often with their caregivers and families, and provided mentorship and linkages to business providers in communities that youth could nurture and draw upon beyond the life of the project. Youth organized into small business groups managed a common livelihoods activity and were supported by business mentors for up to six months following training completion.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION APPRENTICESHIP

NFE Apprenticeship youth entered market-based apprenticeship training courses from accredited vocational institutes or community master artisans. Trainers used a competency-based curriculum developed by WEI/Bantwana, the Uganda Association of Private Vocational Institutions (UGAPRIVI), and the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) that was linked to the Skilling Uganda framework. This enabled youth to obtain DIT-accredited certificates, which strengthened the credentials of the youth and enabled them to seek advanced training.

AYEDI sensitized trainers to child labor and gender

³ The majority of AYEDI youth have been out of school for more than 18 months, which makes most ineligible to return to formal school.

issues and required them to sign memoranda of understanding to ensure training and safe work places for youth.

SECONDARY SCHOOL BLOCK GRANT

AYEDI supported eligible youth to stay in school through block grants that enabled schools to purchase items that improved school quality in exchange for school fees normally paid by children.³ Schools set up clubs that were open to all youth to extend benefits and create safe school environments.

VILLAGE SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATIONS

Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) helped to address the economic drivers of hazardous labor by inculcating a culture of savings, strengthening financial literacy skills, and helping youth and caregivers save and invest in family livelihoods. VSLA platforms strengthened financial literacy skills that were linked to livelihoods goals and sensitized caregivers to the dangers of hazardous labor.

- “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



Youth get to know one another through games that help form bonds and build communication skills.

COMMUNITY CHILD LABOR COMMITTEES

AYEDI-trained community resource persons already engaged in child protection worked with local governments to strengthen child labor sensitization. Community Child Labour Committee (CCLC) members followed up on child labor cases with families through the proven community-based case management model developed by WEI/Bantwana and the GoU in 2014.

ELEMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS: AYEDI COMPONENTS

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT CLUB (YEC) PACKAGE: LAYING THE FOUNDATION

POSITIVE SHIFTS IN ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS BY YOUTH: “ENTREPRENEURIAL MIND-SET” AND MUTUAL RESPECT

Overwhelmingly, youth, caregivers, and communities identified positive shifts in the attitudes and behaviors by the young people resulting from their participation in YECs as key to their success. These changes resulted from anchoring the club curriculum in goal setting, linking life skills to youth’s goals, and helping youth to adopt an entrepreneurial ‘can-do’ mind-set towards achieving their goals.

- “I think everything they learned in the club package helped them so much because it is the foundation. They needed to change their behavior and attitude before being recruited for any other pathway.”
- AYEDI caregiver

Adolescent girls and boys talked about developing leadership skills; making better choices; becoming more disciplined, patient, and goal oriented; having more self-confidence, including speaking up for themselves; and understanding their rights and responsibilities. Youth highlighted the importance of learning about adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) and taking better care of themselves.

Youth also talked about the different choices they now make and how these positive changes have, in turn, resulted in positive feedback from caregivers and others in the community, including prospective employers. Youth recognized that these attitude changes were necessary to achieve long-term goals through greater self-discipline and patience.



Youth also talked about the different choices they now make and how these positive changes have resulted in positive feedback from caregivers and others in the community. This created a positive cycle of feedback that, as youth describe, changed the way they present themselves.

STRENGTHENED SOCIAL ASSETS: FROM ISOLATION TO CONNECTION

In addition to teamwork, youth talked about a much broader relational focus and the positive impact of strengthened supports from peers, facilitators, caregivers, and the broader community. Youth described how they used skills learned in the clubs to make better decisions and to spend more time with friends who positively influence their lives. Youth spoke about using these skills not only on their own behalf, but also to help their friends.



Youth emphasized the importance of the club package—the topics themselves and how they were sequenced to build on one another—to lay the foundation for positive changes in young people’s lives.

STRENGTHENED LIFE SKILLS KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-CARE

Youth acknowledged the importance of improved knowledge about ASRH and self-care, including abstinence, condom use, sexually-transmitted diseases



(including HIV), and family planning, particularly in the context of their impact on youth's long-term goals. Boys reported that improved knowledge about condoms in reducing pregnancy and the risk of disease shifted their thinking about sex. Girls learned about protection from sexually-transmitted diseases, the importance of HIV testing and knowing one's status, and family planning methods.

The club package felt relevant and connected to their lives. As expressed by one AYEDI youth, "The club package was interesting, especially sexual reproductive health and family planning. They were topics that youth liked so much because they were telling the real-life stories."

• "As a result of the leadership skills I learned in the clubs, I now can boldly stand before people and talk well. I am now a leader in my church and at home too. I am a female youth leader in my clan."

– AYEDI youth

ADAPTING PROGRAMMING TO ALIGN WITH YOUTH NEEDS

The club package was initially designed for a six-month implementation period. High drop-out early in the project required urgent innovation to improve retention of youth who were impatient to learn trade skills and start businesses to earn money.

AYEDI made four significant changes to the club package:

1. Reduced the club package from six months to three months;
2. Introduced goal setting and livelihoods selection upfront to link additional life skills topics back to individual goals;
3. Integrated Alternative Livelihoods Skills trainings into clubs; and
4. Integrated competitive sports and games to generate interest and energize, retain, and recruit youth.

EARLY INTRODUCTION OF ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS SKILLS TRAINING

Early on, WEI/Bantwana recognized that youth struggled to generate sufficient income. To address this, AYEDI introduced a one-day Alternative Livelihoods Skills activity to help youth learn simple, low-cost income generating skills that allowed them to earn small income from decent work making soap, *chapati*, shoes, craft bags, candles, etc.

This helped youth leave hazardous work more quickly and helped improve support from caregivers who saw quick, immediate results from their children's involvement in AYEDI.



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Games used to teach teamwork and leadership in clubs strengthened social connections between youth while building foundational skills for livelihoods and life.

LIVELIHOODS TRAINING PATHWAYS TO DECENT WORK

INTEGRATED FUNCTIONAL LITERACY FOR YOUTH

Modern agriculture and business/financial literacy skills:

The six-month IFLY pathway focused largely on modern agricultural skills, basic financial and literacy skills, and business principles while furthering skills in leadership, teamwork, and work readiness. Local agribusiness partners provided training and ongoing mentoring; supported business start-up; and helped youth establish relationships with suppliers, vendors, and customers for up to four months following training completion.

Initially resistant to agriculture, youth slowly changed their perceptions once they understood the link between earning potential and modern farming skills. Study tours and trainings by local experts helped youth learn how to grow and manage crops and livestock and strengthened youth's confidence and knowledge as they learned to ask questions of local experts. Youth reported that business skills, including customer care, presentation of themselves and their products, and interpersonal leadership and teamwork skills, were critical to the success of their businesses. Learning to save, simple record keeping, and business model development were also instrumental to their success. Youth talked about learning the difference between investment capital and profit, business diversification, and how to grow their businesses. Ongoing mentorship strengthened their patience for long-term success.

Controlling spending and meeting basic needs:

All respondents reinforced the importance of youth learning to save. Encouragement from IFLY facilitators and local businesses helped youth to resist spending money on unnecessary items and to instead save or reinvest money in business. Some youth developed group business agreements to encourage saving and control spending; others joined AYEDI-supported youth VSLAs. Youth talked about savings mentors: caregivers who helped monitor and give advice and other adults who held acquired cash for them until they were ready to invest in their businesses.

- “In IFLY, I learned how to be patient and how to handle money and record keeping. I had a business before AYEDI, but every time I got money, I would just spend it. After studying about financial literacy, I changed the way I handle business.”
- – AYEDI youth

Continuous encouragement from other people to control spending for long-term goals was crucial. Many youth reported that learning to save helped them to contribute regularly to households and/or manage their children's medical care, school fees, and other needs.



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Teamwork and entrepreneurship: Following training, IFLY youth were divided into small groups, and each group was provided with seed money to start a group business. Youth saw the benefits and challenges of group versus single business ownership. Advantages to group work included more minds to develop plans, share ideas, solve problems, prevent mistakes, expand activities, share responsibilities, and generate more money. Youth found that single business ownership, however, was easier to manage; conflict, jealousy, or unequal workload is avoided, and profits are solely owned.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION APPRENTICESHIP

The four-month NFE Apprenticeship pathway typically included three months of skills training and a one-month internship/placement at a training institute or local business. Tied to the national framework for Skilling Youth and linked to career pathways, AYEDI developed the NFE Apprenticeship pathway in tandem with the national Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT). This pathway enabled youth to sit for a national certificate exam recognized by government and the private sector.

Youth spoke proudly about the technical skills they gained and the importance of the internship/placement to learn and reinforce technical and business skills. Youth reinforced the importance of customer service, which built on communication skills learned through the club package; customer respect; dependability; and referrals for customer base expansion as important elements of their training.

AYEDI SUCCESS ELEMENTS: CROSS CUTTING

CAREGIVER AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT: A HOUSEHOLD APPROACH


The original AYEDI design did not allow for sufficient investment in caregiver engagement, which ultimately emerged as a central element of success for AYEDI youth on multiple levels. Initially, caregivers and

youth were skeptical of the AYEDI project based on prior negative experiences with poorly-implemented projects. Some caregivers did not want lose the short-term financial contributions of their youth, and youth were impatient with long-term goals.

Over time, attitudes and trust shifted as communities saw youth leaving hazardous labor and witnessed successful youth businesses and positive changes in caregivers. Once caregivers saw their neighbors benefiting from VSLAs, modern farming activities, kitchen gardens, and other AYEDI activities, they were remarkably responsive to the project. Caregivers in this study described impressive changes in themselves, their children, and their households.

EMPHASIS ON FAMILY RESILIENCE

Caregivers talked with pride about the positive behavior changes and relationships with their children. Whereas caregivers once used words like “rebellious,” “wild,” “bad,” or “lost,” to describe their children, they saw their youth taking responsibility and seeking their advice as a result of their youth’s involvement in AYEDI. Caregivers described their ‘open’ relationships with their children, filled with friendship and sharing. Caregivers spoke with pride about seeing their adolescent children take up leadership roles in their clans, churches, schools, and other community venues and witnessing the positive shifts in community members’ perception of their youth, who now saw their children as ‘role models.’

 Caregivers’ descriptions of changes in youth’s attitudes and behaviors paralleled the descriptions provided from the youth themselves. They used to describe youth as “rebellious,” but now they see them taking responsibility. Relationships have opened up as a result.

Prior to AYEDI, caregivers admitted that they were struggling with poverty, with many children to feed. Approaching their problems in the ways in which they were raised, caregivers dismissed their adolescents as they began to rebel. Some admitted to sending their children away to bring in money, regardless of danger (i.e., girls trading sex for money) or marrying off a young daughter to bring temporary financial relief, seeing no other viable options and focusing only on the demands of the present.

After AYEDI, caregivers said they are less likely to make short-term decisions that can harm their children. They attributed these changes to opportunities for viable income generating activities (IGAs), and the psychosocial and child protection education that they received from the VSLAs, CCLCs, club facilitators, and IFLY/NFE instructors.

Discussions on children’s rights, the dangers of child labor, and alternatives to hazardous work shifted caregivers’ thinking and approach. Like the youth, caregivers encouraged by CCLCs and other community resources persons began to take a different view, focusing more on long-term benefits rather than temporary gain.

“Youth in my village were having bad habits and did hazardous work, but we did not mind because our motive was to get something to eat. Our children had to work in bars or other dangerous places because they had to get money to take care of our homes. Youth are supporting caregivers in a big way. They are saving the money they make from their workplaces and businesses they operate.”
– AYEDI caregiver

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

Key elements of success for the IFLY pathway:

MODERN FARMING SKILLS	Study tours to local agribusinesses, training and mentoring by local experts, generating income from diverse agriculture activities
BUSINESS SKILLS	Customer care, marketing skills, income diversification, and profit reinvestment skills
FINANCIAL LITERACY SKILLS	Learning to save, record keeping, understanding business model frameworks, and differences between capital and profit
INTERPERSONAL SKILLS	Leadership and teamwork, continuous coaching and mentorship to strengthen their discipline and patience to achieve long term goals

Positive changes in AYEDI youth and their caregivers were mutually reinforcing. Both youth and caregivers reported that as youth began to change their behavior towards their caregivers, the caregivers began to offer more support, like financial assistance with young businesses, childcare for girls with children who could not otherwise attend trainings or meet business demands, and emotional support and encouragement.

Caregivers also shared pride about their youths' business success and noted that youth contributed to meeting the basic needs of the households at higher levels than they did when they were engaged in hazardous labor.



Positive changes in AYEDI youth and their caregivers were mutually reinforcing: as youth began to change how they interacted and behaved at home and in the community, caregivers became more receptive and supportive of their youths' business ventures.

Caregivers were proud of their success and the positive contributions they have made to the household.

CONTINUOUS MENTORSHIP THROUGHOUT THE PATHWAY

AYEDI youth repeatedly emphasized continuous mentoring and support as key elements of their persistence, motivation, and retention in their pathway and, in turn, their ultimate success. In addition to the club, NFE, and IFLY instructors, youth also frequently mentioned encouragement from guest speakers—local government, caregivers, and local business mentors—as central to their success.

MOTIVATION AND RETENTION OF COMMUNITY RESOURCE PERSONS

For caregivers, CCLC members, and club facilitators, witnessing and supporting the success of adolescent youth were central motivating factors for their continued participation in AYEDI. However, the benefits extended beyond the successes of the youth. Club facilitators discussed their own learning and the knowledge that they gained from the club materials. Their training served them not only with youth, but also with caregivers and other community members.

Uniformly, increased community recognition and respect were cited as significant motivating factors for the persistence of facilitators, instructors, and CCLC members in their largely volunteer work with youth.

These community resource persons also benefited from savings trainings and participation in AYEDI



AYEDI girls in Lira District participating in a club session on short- and long-term goal setting. These youth named their club the “AYEDI Young Stars Girls Club.”

savings groups. They emphasized the effectiveness of the AYEDI VSLA, which provided structured information and “rules” that resulted in highly functioning and productive savings groups, unlike those they had experienced in the past.

Joining VSLAs and starting to save also played a part in the respect they gained from the community. They talked about the motivation and encouragement they received from the group to make money to invest, the relief they felt from having access to affordable loans, and the responsibility they felt for timely loan repayment.

EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

To create ownership and ensure programming built on existing government structures and policies, WEI/Bantwana involved the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) and the Ministry of Education (MoE) in the development and review of curricula and the design of the IFLY and the NFE Apprenticeship pathways from the outset.

Locally, the engagement of Community Development Officers (CDOs) in recruitment, community child labor sensitization and mobilization, case management, small-scale employer monitoring, and sports and cultural events were seen by CDOs and local business partners as critical to the success of the project. Government engagement leveraged government resources,

strengthened the credibility of the project with communities and other stakeholders, improved linkages with business and higher levels of government, and encouraged government take-up of core components.



Local government and business partners reinforced the importance of strong involvement from the outset: government engagement leveraged resources, strengthened program credibility, established links with higher levels of government, and encouraged uptake of effective components of the IFLY program.

CDOs echoed the other respondents’ views of the positive changes in the youth, highlighting that AYEDI youth stand out in their communities as leaders and as role models to others.

- “We are part of the community and since AYEDI is working in our community, I feel it’s my responsibility to take care of any business in my area of operation. Working with AYEDI gave us great motivation to work tirelessly to combat child labor.”
- – AYEDI CDO, Lira District



Through the NFE Apprenticeship pathway, adolescents learned auto mechanics from experts. They gained practical, hands-on skills from master apprentices who also provided ongoing mentorship.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

Family-based approaches: The influence of caregivers cannot be overstated, given their role as decision-makers in families and the influence that they have on their children's success. From the outset, caregivers should be engaged in activities that involve their children. Activities that influence a paradigm shift in the way that youth think about themselves and their future are also essential and should be integrated into foundational skills building at the start of the project. At the same time, caregiver sensitization and opportunities for adolescent youth and caregivers to work and dialogue together is essential for making positive shifts in parent-child dynamics and providing all parties with new, positive experiences that are mutually reinforcing. Simple shifts in communication and behavior between youth and caregivers had a tremendous positive impact on how youth saw themselves and, in turn, how they were positively perceived and responded to by others. This change was particularly evident in the improved family relationships and cooperation that proved critical to the overall success of AYEDI youth.

Continuous mentorship and tailored trainings: This case study has underscored the primary importance of mentors, inclusive of, but extending even beyond caregivers and other family members. Other significant mentors mentioned by youth include project facilitators, trainers, community volunteers, and government officials, who continue to influence AYEDI youth (and other youth in their communities) well beyond the conclusion of the project. Training must be designed and structured to respond to young people's needs and developmental levels. They need to provide

the building blocks that will enable them to succeed.

Low-cost income diversification: Vulnerable Ugandan families have always relied on multiple sources of income to mitigate deep poverty. AYEDI quickly learned that adolescent youth needed alternative sources of income during their training period, which led to WEI/Bantwana's introduction of the Alternative Livelihoods Skills training. The results were immediate: youth reported that the training motivated them to stay engaged in their long-term training and improved support from caregivers, who saw more immediate results of the project. This, in turn, increased caregivers' trust and motivation to support their youth and helped youth to more quickly move away from hazardous labor without compromising the critical income that they and their families rely on.

Hazardous labor disengagement: Feedback from AYEDI youth, caregivers, project staff, CCLCs, and local government over the course of the AYEDI project strongly suggested that disengagement from hazardous labor by children is a process, neither static nor time-bound. Harmful effects of child labor, opportunities to earn money from decent work, and slowly-changing norms related to the acceptability of hazardous labor in communities and by employers influenced positive shifts away from children's participation in hazardous labor. As children and caregivers were exposed to different, more desirable options for earning income and their economic resilience increased, hazardous work became less acceptable. WEI/Bantwana's insistence that all AYEDI youth participate in modern farming and its introduction of the Alternative Livelihoods Skills training aimed to ensure that viable, safe income



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An AYEDI entrepreneur in her new restaurant in Gulu District. She invested profits from her produce stand at the market to open the restaurant. She works in the market in the morning when it's busy, then she comes to the restaurant for lunch and dinner service.

generating options were available to youth quickly. These options allowed youth and families to engage in a range of decent work opportunities, spreading economic risk and reducing dependence on one income source, which, in turn, appeared to mitigate families' vulnerability to slipping into deeper poverty.

Continuous innovation and a holistic approach for reducing hazardous labor: Poverty is an obvious and powerful driver of hazardous labor. However, caregivers, parents, and community observers stressed the importance of hazardous labor sensitization. Parents who were under various pressures and had limited resources often approached issues like hazardous labor in familiar ways, especially with young people who were seen as old enough to fend for themselves, beginning to be rebellious, or seen as 'already lost.' However, they were also responsive to learning different approaches, especially when adolescents shifted their thinking and attitudes while receiving training and support. Additionally, youth and caregivers reinforced the importance of work-readiness skills, life skills, and social supports and networks to help strengthen families. WEI/Bantwana continuously drew on the AYEDI team and a broader set of stakeholders to test and study innovations to fill in gaps emerging from the field. Quarterly and annual reflections created space for all to come up with creative solutions. These reflections led to the integration of innovations like sports and culture competitions to improve retention, the development of the Alternative Livelihoods Skills training, intentional caregiver engagement, and additional post-training support from local business partners to help youth establish and stabilize their decent work activities.

Supporting youth throughout and beyond training: Youth need ongoing and consistent encouragement, motivation, and mentorship when they are learning new skills and making changes, beyond a three- or four-month training pathway. Adolescent youth also need post-training support to help them build sufficient financial literacy skills, establish their businesses, build customer bases, make strong connections with local suppliers, and learn how to save and invest in their businesses. From the AYEDI project, it became evident that these additional supports were critical to sustaining youth's decent work activities beyond the end of the project.

Value of community and local government engagement: Participation and commitment of community members and local government were essential to the success of AYEDI youth. Community members reported that seeing the benefit to youth and families was a great motivation for their sustained participation, as was the feeling that they were respected, listened to, and involved in shaping the evolution of the project. They also reported that small incentives were important to their continued participation, as they were also supporting their families and had to balance their volunteer time with activities that generated income. Engaging local government from the start of the project provided credibility to the project with community members who were skeptical of AYEDI's value based on their negative past experiences. This engagement also opened up additional resources for AYEDI to support agricultural activities and help link youth, as model youth farmers, to small IGAs during community demonstrations.



CCLC members sensitizing communities on hazardous and child labor issues in Iganga District.

Gender matters: Several areas emerged that both reinforced and challenged traditional gender norms:

- **Livelihoods selection:** While several AYEDI boys and girls, as well as the NFE instructors, believed that anyone with a skill can do anything regardless of gender, youth recognized that traditional gender norms imposed restrictions on their livelihoods options.⁴
- **Greater responsibilities of girls:** Boys, girls, training instructors, and community members in AYEDI communities all acknowledged that girls' responsibilities in the family, especially around child rearing (either their own children or younger siblings) influenced their participation in AYEDI and their livelihood choices. While young mothers acknowledged their additional responsibilities, they were also quick to mention that the improved relationships with their caregivers resulted in

greater childcare support from their caregivers.

- **Girls' discipline and patience:** Girls, boys, and training instructors suggested that discipline and patience came more naturally to girls, perhaps due to their greater responsibilities, which underscores the importance of mentors who offer constant encouragement to all youth to achieve long-term goals.
- **Mixed and single-gender life skill sessions:** Boys and girls felt that it was important for boys to be included in topics such as menstruation and family planning to increase understanding between girls and boys and to help boys/young men take responsibility in areas of sexuality and as partners in relationships. Other youth believed that it was important that girls discuss certain topics among themselves—particularly when they lack trust that boys will treat private issues about them respectfully within and outside of the clubs.

⁴ Due to gender norms in Uganda, many people believe that roles like mechanics are for boys and occupations such as hairdressing, baking, or working in markets are for girls.



At this AYEDI group business in Gulu District, both boys and girls learn hair braiding and work together when serving their customers.

MOVING FORWARD

WEI/Bantwana has identified and consolidated key information, next steps, and lessons learned to share them broadly with the GoU; USDOL; and other development partners in Uganda, the region, and around the globe, including:

- Uptake and expansion of successful elements of AYEDI into WEI/Bantwana's broader youth project portfolio under the USAID/Uganda Better Outcomes for Children and Youth in Eastern and Northern Uganda project, reaching more than 14,000 adolescents and older youth across 20 districts;
- Government uptake and piloting of elements of IFLY under the GoU's Wealth Creation project, specifically targeting Uganda's youth;
- Documentation and dissemination of the project's lessons learned by WEI/Bantwana as well as the broader AYEDI and evaluation teams;
- Handover of the club, IFLY, and NFE curricula to the GoU and development partners to adapt, refine, and scale up in other youth-focused programs in Uganda; and
- Broad sharing of lessons learned from the project through national, regional, and global platforms.



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An AYEDI youth in Gulu District proudly displays her business workbook containing her profit and loss statements and expense sheets.

APPENDIX I

CASE STUDY DATA COLLECTION: METHODS, TEAM, AND TOOLS

The key data collection methods used to develop this case study were:

1. Review of relevant project documents
2. Field visits to two out of the four districts implementing the project: one district in eastern Uganda and one district in northern Uganda for observation and interviews with a range of stakeholders

CASE STUDY RESPONDENTS

DISTRICT	MODALITY	RESPONDENTS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Iganga	Focus group discussions (FGDs)	Girls	11 (ages 17 – 18)
		Boys	9 (ages 16 – 20)
		Caregivers	14
		Community Resource Persons	9
Lira	Focus group discussions (FGDs)	Girls	10 (ages 15 – 18)
		Boys	7 (ages 16 – 20)
		Caregivers	10 (ages 28 – 75)
		CDOs	6
	Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)	CDO	1
		Private sector NFE Instructors	2
		Private sector IFLY mentors	1

METHODOLOGY

The data collection team consisted of three members in each of the two districts, including the Project Officer and two Field Assistants (FAs) in each district. The team underwent a two-day training that included input into the data collection tools and training on interviewing and FGD facilitation techniques. The FGDs and KIIs were conducted by the Project Officer in each district. The Project Officer was instructed to use the interview tool as a guide and also to add additional probe questions to dig more deeply into the views shared by respondents. A technical consultant provided oversight of the FGDs and interviews. FGDs and some KIIs were conducted in the local language. Real time translation was provided for the consultant by one of the FAs. The other trained FA transcribed the interviews as closely to verbatim as possible. The transcripts were later translated into English for data analysis.

SAMPLING

Sampling for this qualitative study was purposive. Since the objective of the study was to learn more about what factors specifically contribute to the success of getting young people out of hazardous work, youth who have successfully done that and had varying degrees of success in establishing new businesses based on the acquisition of new skills were selected by the FAs in each district. They also chose youth and caregivers who live within a manageable distance from the areas where the FGDs were held. Caregivers of the selected youth were requested to participate in the caregiver FGD held in each district. Key informants were chosen based on their role in AYEDI. Instructors involved with youth enrolled in IFLY and NFE were interviewed. For the perspective of government, a CDO who has played an active role in AYEDI was interviewed as well. Finally, a FGD was held with community resource persons, as they brought the community perspective. Many played central roles in engaging the youth as patrons and matrons and also provided the critical mentoring role to the youth and caregivers. Including the sample from youth, caregivers, and service providers enabled triangulation of the data, in order to gain a full understanding of the areas of question.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was guided by the purpose of the study of FGDs. Transcripts, combined with observations and field notes, were examined based on topic areas asked about and for ideas and themes identified by the various cohorts. These themes were scrutinized for similarities and differences within and across cohorts to provide a full understanding.



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