



**GENERATING GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES AND
PRODUCTIVITY FOR WOMEN ENTERPRISES**

DIGEST



YMCA GROW PROJECT COHORT GRADUATION APRIL 2024



**THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA
MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**



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The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) successfully trained and graduated 383 women entrepreneurs, who were mobilized from the host and refugee communities of Kampala and Isingiro districts.

These women entrepreneurs underwent intensive training and skill-building for three weeks where they were equipped with enterprise development services, including technical, life, and digital skills.

Each woman beneficiary needed to own a business and possess a refugee status card (in the case of refugees) to qualify for the training.



The Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Hon. Betty Amongin said that its a milestone for over 380 women refugees from Kampala and Isingiro districts who completed a three-week intensive entrepreneurial training in 14 different trades at the YMCA training centre.

I observed that, decoration training unit attracted the most trainees, but the project is designed to support collaborations and associations of women entrepreneurs in related trades.

Therefore, those in decoration can create a platform to access support in form of tents, chairs, and other necessary equipment and tools to enable them to grow together professionally and profitably as decorators and event managers.



Hon. Betty Amongin
Minister of Gender Labour and Social Development

The trained and skilled women will be included in the GROW project database and recommended to access cheap capital from project-accredited financial institutions in their areas of operation to grow and expand their businesses.

Women entrepreneurs will be able to borrow cheap capital between 4,000,000 to 200,000,000 shillings at an annual interest of 10%.

The project also offers free common-user facilities and grants for exceptional women entrepreneurs who need advanced and expensive equipment to expand their businesses.

The grants can be accessed through a grant competition after writing unique and compelling business proposals.





Dr. Ruth Biyinzika Kasolo
PSFU/GROW Project Coordinator

By April 2024, Over 35 partners had received GROW project grants to train women entrepreneurs in different focus trades appropriate to their businesses. The GROW project is deeply committed to inclusivity, targeting 6000 women entrepreneurs from both host and refugee host communities for this particular subcomponent.

The project strives for a balanced representation, with 25% of beneficiaries being refugees and 75% from the host communities. This diversity is not just a goal, but a fundamental aspect of the project's success.

Dr. Ruth Biyinzika Kasolo emphasizes that the **GROW Project** is a significant national initiative in Uganda, providing women with access to entrepreneurial skills, affordable credit, mentorship, coaching, and common user facilities.

The project aims to empower every woman in Uganda, enabling her to grow and transition her enterprise from Micro to small and from small to medium, thereby enhancing her productivity.

It is common knowledge that several women miss training opportunities because they have younger children they cannot leave behind or carry along for engagements away from their communities.

Fortunately, the GROW project is designed to address most of these barriers, including the provision of fully funded childcare facilities and caretakers at every training center where women are training.

If it requires more facilities and funding for child care, the project is ready to reconsider, ensuring that no woman is hindered from participating in the project due to childcare responsibilities.

Dr. Ruth urges the designers of other women empowerment interventions to benchmark the GROW project Child care facility to reduce women's barriers to fully exploring their potential for social and economic growth and transformation.



The project is designed to ensure that women entrepreneurs get trained and gain better skills, they all have access to the necessary tools and equipment appropriate for their exclusive businesses.

Before the end of the 2023/2024 financial year, the GROW line of credit, which will be accessible through a simple application process, should start as soon as possible to ensure that women can access cheap capital for their businesses.

The criteria for women to access GROW project facilities is a simple one, it only requires one to be a woman running any kind of business between the ages of 16 years to 75.

It should, however, be noted that as we advance, men could be part of the project training as employees or suppliers of women-owned businesses, thereby fostering a more inclusive and supportive business environment.

Dr. Grace Kamulegeya, the GROW project lead at YMCA, said that 1100 women refugees were reached during mobilization, and 500 expressed interest in participating in the cohort, 385 qualified out of the 500 applicants. This was because, during the evaluation, it was discovered that some applicants did not have the refugee number or card required to qualify for the training and, therefore, missed the opportunity.

Out of the 385 applicants who qualified for the program, a diverse group of refugee participants were nationals from the Republic of Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, turned up for the training. This inclusivity is a reflection of the project's impact on a wide range of communities.

The YMCA, in collaboration with the People for Defences of Peace and Rights Network, Refugee Community Leaders, and Congolese Urban Refugees Women, successfully mobilized for the project. These partners played a crucial role in directly engaging with the target groups, thereby enhancing the project's reach and impact.



The training was a comprehensive three-week intensive residential program, with six hours of phased lessons per day. This cohort started on 6 April 2024 and ended on 25th April 2024 with a graduation ceremony, marking the successful completion of the training and the participants' readiness for the next phase of their journey.

THE TRAINING AND SKILLING UNITS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING

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|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. VIDEOGRAPHY | 11. CHILD HEALTH AND |
| 2. PHOTOGRAPHY | NUTRITION |
| 3. EVENTS DECORATION | 12. LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT |
| 4. HAND CROCHETING | SKILLS |
| 5. CRAFT SHOE MAKING | 13. GUIDANCE AND |
| 6. FABRIC DECORATION | COUNSELING |
| 7. COMPUTER APPLICATIONS | 14. EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE |
| 8. GRAPHICS DESIGN | AND PARENTING SKILLS |
| 9. HOME MANAGEMENT 4 | |
| 10. CHILD GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT | |

Dr. Kamulegeya notes that some training units were oversubscribed, which prompted interventions to handle these overlaps. Events and Decoration had more subscribers than expected, and more streams had to be created to better manage the numbers. Computer Application and Craft Shoe Making, too, had more subscribers than expected.

YMCA's commitment to inclusivity and support for women entrepreneurs is evident in the establishment of childcare facilities. This is a key requirement of the GROW project, ensuring that no one is left out because they are nursing a baby. The impact of this support is significant, with over 20 babies cared for in this facility. One mother reported having four children and was allocated a four-person bedroom to ensure her and the children's comfort, further highlighting the project's commitment to supporting women entrepreneurs.

The project lead also notes the proactive approach to participant well-being, even when the institute already had an established health unit with appropriate staff. The cohort exerted pressure on the available resources when many participants presented with Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs). The institute responded swiftly, ensuring the health and safety of all participants. Two women entrepreneurs also had third-trimester pregnancies, and one was almost due, further highlighting the project's commitment to participant well-being.

The institute's health unit is run by a nurse and a regular clinical officer to handle more severe cases. Still, where there is an emergency need, there is a standby ambulance and a nearby hospital in partnership with the institute.

HIGHLIGHTS

Refugee community and opinion leaders blessed the cohort: Leaders from the refugee communities who worked with the project leaders to orient the participants created a more amiable environment and commitment for them to participate in the training. The leaders urged the participants to take the training more seriously and have clear objectives relating to growth and transformation as individuals as well as their enterprises.

CHALLENGES

- Two expectant mothers, one of them was almost due, which we did not anticipate would be the case. In case they required extra care during and after delivery.
- Cultural, religious, and general etiquettes: Reconciling and harmonizing where the expectations of each nationality conflict with the institution's available systems, some nationals were rigid, not willing to adjust to generally acceptable systems.
- Language barrier: Because participants come from different countries, more than one interpreter in one training unit could be required, which can make communication a problem.
- Nationality cocooning was still hard to break through, but participants keep it in the company of their fellow nationals.
- Urinary Tract Infections: Several women refugees reported for the cohort with Urinary Tract Infections, which required the institution to come up with an immediate medical response to control the spread among other participants as well as treatment

LESSONS LEARNT

- Health and safety measures require a clear plan for essential medical examinations on arrival in the future to avoid spreading issues in case of contagious infections.
- Need to establish regular working terms with the refugee community leaders all through the training processes.



PARTICIPANTS FEEDBACK

The opportunity to enhance our skills and learn new ones, all at no cost, is truly invaluable. We commend the government for providing such a beneficial program. The participants were deeply grateful for the institute's management, expressed their appreciation for the welfare support extended to them.

They were offered decent bedding, food, and extracurricular activities, as well as medical treatment whenever required. They were also given training hampers containing items such as gowns, bags, notebooks, sanitary pads, Mosquito nets, spoons, and buckets.

Child care centre: grateful for the child care centre an indication of inclusivity, which is very hard to find The participants, driven by their commitment to comprehensive training and skills enhancement, express a strong desire for a more extended training period. They believe that more time would allow for a more thorough learning experience.

The Computer Application trainees would also appreciate having appropriate practice equipment.

The participants also highly valued the counselling and guidance course unit, mainly because it provided a personal healing avenue for them as individuals. They strongly recommended that it be made compulsory for every participant, emphasizing its significant impact.

Ester Abu

An elderly Kampala refugee woman living with a physical disability that limits her mobility. She is taking the shoemaking class with the hope of establishing a cottage industry after the training. Ester is grateful for the training, saying shoemaking is an entirely new skill she is attaining. She loves the fact that she has already crafted several pairs, right from sketch to finished product.



Julian Juveni

I am a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, staying in Kampala, and a jewelry hawker. I also take care of children as a passion. I have trained in child health and nutrition at the YMCA to turn my passion into a career.

The training has been eye-opening, and I have learned about holistic childcare practices."

"I've realized that I have been making a lot of mistakes in regards to the care and nutrition of the children I take care of.

I have been using generalized information, but now that I know better, I need to restructure my approach and involve the parents in understanding





Racheal Kolo

"I am a vendor who sells various types of clothing in the Nakivale refugee settlement camp. I have chosen to specialize in fabric decoration to improve my trade through diversification and creativity.

I have been training under GROW at the YMCA campus for the past three weeks, and during this time, I have gained valuable skills in fabric chemical rationing and mixing, allowing me to convert any fabric into Multiple desired designs.

When I return to the camp, I plan to add more designs and materials to my business. Additionally, I hope to share the skills I have learned with other women who want to acquire them."

Eva Shukuro

I live in Nakivale Settlement, so being able to participate in this training is a dream come true for me. I'm training for my dream job, which would be to practice photography and videography.

I take pictures as I go about the settlement using my amateur skills, but now that I've received professional training, I can use a computer to edit the photos and adjust the camera for good lighting and composition. To create photographs of the highest caliber, I want to find a suitable location for my studio.

I don't take the hospitality from the Ugandan government for granted; I am extremely appreciative of their dignified treatment of us refugees and their concern for our well-being. Although the government provides a lot of assistance to refugees already, if it is feasible, I would like to receive support in the form of a computer, a good camera, and rent to help expand my business.



Sendikadiwa Bashir
Instructor videography

I am grateful to the government for the GROW project, even though it is an exclusive facility for women, I am among the few men lucky enough to benefit from the project as an instructor.

I have trained 24 refugee women entrepreneurs in this YMCA Cohort, they have been trained in business management and planning, shooting different events, scripting for different productions, and camera operation including camera assembling.



Belinda Kisanga

"I am a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, I used to study but dropped out of school because my parents could not afford school fees.

I started to run a small family restaurant using generalized knowledge and skills, this restaurant was initially run by my mother but could not make enough money to keep me in school. when this opportunity presented itself, I decided to choose home management because it directly corresponds with restaurant management.

In this training unit, I have been able to learn leadership skills, communication, making a budget, investment, and saving decisions I learned technical skills as well such as making bleach and liquid soap, these products don't require a lot of money for capital but have a ready market since they are basic cleaning requirements for most homes and workplaces.

I plan to use these skills to grow the family restaurant into a professional competitive business and also start a personal side business in making and selling detergents. Home management prepared me for any experience regardless of where I operate from. I am grateful to the GROW project and YMCA for giving me and others this opportunity especially even when we are refugees.



Miriam Biramwisho

I am a refugee from the democratic republic of Congo I have been in Uganda for eight years now before I got this opportunity to train, I was hawking clothes, and it was a hard hustle but now I have been training to do crocheting, and it offers a diversity of opportunities.

I plan to start my own crocheting business to make and sell crochet products such as scarves, skirts, bags, and a variety of items to satisfy my market. I just need a push capital of about two million Uganda shillings to buy the materials to start with

Grace Akalembe

I am Grace Akalembe staying in the Kyaka refugee settlement, I am a tailor in the settlement but when I came here I joined the crocheting class, and I gained skills thanks to the Instructors, now I can make skirts, bags, and several other items.

when I go back I will complement my tailoring business with crocheting to create product diversity for my customers and also elevate myself and my family economically. I am grateful to the YMCA, Grow Project, and the government of Uganda for giving us a home away from our original homes



Ayani Abdallah

My name is Ayani a refugee from Somalia living in Kampala, I have learned crocheting for the last three weeks I have been here at YMCA, this is an area of skill set that I had no idea about but desire to learn, I used to watch tutorials on social media and wished to learn such skills. I decided to do it because it engages my sense of creativity and gives me the power to create my styles and designs.



I initially worked as a salesperson in a supermarket, but it was not fulfilling, after three weeks of training, I am confident I have the above average skillset, I just need a little money for the materials and work from home, creating different items as such as scarves, bags, skirts, and tops, with my design. I plan to do more research online to find out what more I can do out of crocheting. I would like to thank Ugandans generally for accepting us as their own, the communities where we stay are so friendly and welcoming.

Kisi kara Mazani



I have trained in Child Health and Nutrition here at the YMCA under the GROW project, the course period has been short but very intensive at impacting. Back home, I work in my Uncle's clinic, I learn on the job complementing the little knowledge and skills I acquired while doing a nursing course that I did not complete.

The three weeks of training in Child Health and Nutrition has given me more knowledge and skills and now I can make a meal plan for a child from six months to one year. This is very important to stop malnutrition among children.

From this training, I have learned that the right and appropriate nutrition is the most important treatment for a child. Child Health and Nutrition is my passion; I would love to get help to start my day-care and also to finish up my nursing course. I am a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, but I have been here in Uganda for a while with my parents.

I am grateful to the YMCA and the Government of Uganda for this GROW project. We just came in with a few personal belongings but we have been given all the basic requirements, besides the technical and soft skills, we have networked and planning to do collaborations.

The meals and accommodation are superb and the relationship between us and our instructors is mutual. I am personally grateful for the hospitality and training as well as the security and safety provided in our settlement communities.

Florence Biye

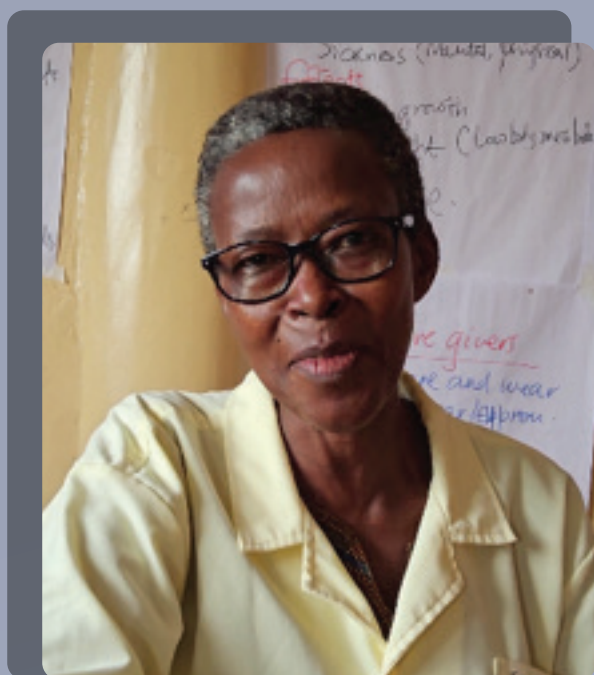
I am Florence Biye, a refugee from South Sudan living in Kampala. I am a Public Health practitioner, with a certificate and diploma in Public Health. When the opportunity to train with the YMCA and GROW project presented, there were several course units to select from according to individual preference and I decided to choose Child health and nutrition.

My choice was inspired by my desire to give back to the community where I live, most families have no idea of what is required to live healthily and prevent illness especially when it comes to children below 5 years of age.



It happens that some children fall sick and their parents cannot afford medical bills yet the illness could have been prevented or managed at home with a good diet. Henceforth, I will mobilize mothers and other caretakers in my community and give them information on the right and manageable child-feeding choices to improve child nutrition and limit illnesses especially those related to poor feeding.

I want to thank the government of Uganda for giving us refugees a home away from home and allowing us to train and acquire technical and soft skills..



Mukamunana Solange

My name is Mukamunana Solange, 62 years of age. I have been here in Uganda for now 12 years as a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

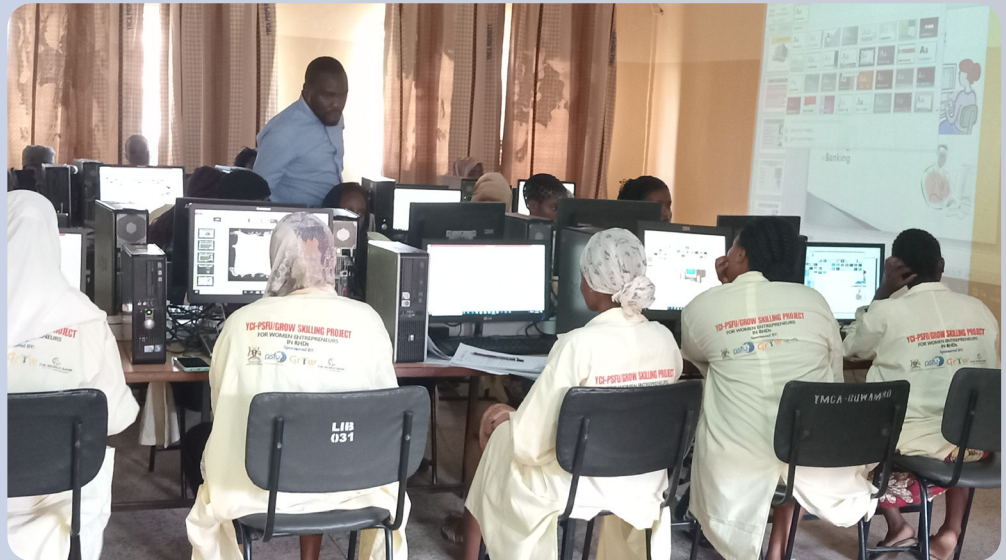
I stay in Bulenga in Kampala, running a business where I use Soya beans to extract milk and make different products out of Soya. I decided to acquire skills in Child Health and Nutrition because most of my customers are parents and caretakers of infants and I also have my grandchildren that I take care of.

I now understand what it takes to keep a child healthy through nutrition and precaution. I have learned what kind of food is appropriate for each age group of infants, and what food nutrients are derived from every food item I give to a child. Immunization is the other skill set I have gained, now I know when to immunize against what diseases.

I am going to use this knowledge and skills to expand my business with more professional food nutrients for infants and also plan to add a childcare center targeting busy mothers with babies.

The challenge however is that the space where I operate is so small, therefore I require more space, about two extra rooms and beds. For all these opportunities, I express my gratitude to the leadership of this country, which is now our home, the refugees.







PSFU GROW Offices
Trust Tower, Ground Floor, Nakasero Kyadondo Road
Email: grow@psfu.org.ug
Tel: +256 394 514 071
Opposite NAADS Offices

Edited by Nankwanga Eunice Kasirye