

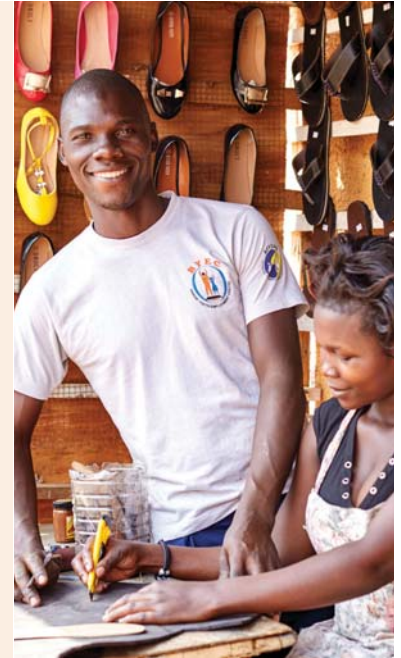
EU PARTNERS IOM UGANDA AND AFFCAD TO PROMOTE SOCIAL COHESION IN SLUMS



Students studying electric installation at the institute in Bwaise, Kampala

SSCoS project's key result areas

- Increased knowledge of conflict drivers in Kampala slum communities
- Capacity strengthening for AFFCAD
- Building community capacity to resist radicalisation and combat violent extremism
- Capacity building for relevant security agencies such as the Counter-Terrorism Police, on radicalisation, extremism and human rights.
- Capacity building for relevant government agencies to conflict-sensitive and non-discriminatory services.
- Vocational training, employment opportunities, and financial aid for start-ups



The project gives youth business skills to better their lives

Slum youth beating odds with support from European Union

By Jacky Achan

Life was good when Farouk Moses Kibirige lived with his mother in Bwaise. She was his sole caretaker. He had a roof over his head. He was clothed, fed and educated by mother.

But fate had other ideas. In his Senior Six, just before Kibirige could sit for his final A'Level examinations, his mother died.

From then, Kibirige had to fend for himself. When he got his A'Level results he had passed, but did not have the money to pay for university education and no relative was willing to help. His education dream looked all but over.

But as luck would have it, Kibirige got to meet Muhammed Kisirisa, the founder and CEO of the Action for Fundamental Change (AFFCAD), the non governmental organisation that runs Bwaise Business and Vocational Institute (BBVI). A scholarship followed and Kibirige now speaks about the future with ample optimism.

As a student at BBVI, Kibirige is one of about 200 youths supported by the Strengthening Social Cohesion and Stability in Slum Populations project (SSCoS).

The project is fully financed by the European Union Trust Fund to the

tune of euros 4.3m (sh16.4b). It is implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Uganda, in partnership with various organisations, including AFFCAD for the Bwaise area.

Among other things, the SSCoS project aims at tackling the drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism in the Kampala slums of Bwaise, Katwe, Kisenyi and Kabalagala. According to the project's baseline survey, poverty and unemployment are among the root causes of communal conflicts in slums. Hence SSCoS works to impart vocational skills in young people, help them get job opportunities and start-up capital for those who want to venture into self-employment.

Kibirige, 24, is enrolled for an electrical installation and repair course which he hopes to complete in December.

But even before he even graduates, he is using the skills so far attained. Working part-time at a friend's workshop, he can carry out simple electrical repairs under supervision.

"The little time I spent working, I am able to make sh6,000 in a day to take care of my needs," Kibirige says.

With palpable sadness, Kibirige laments that the image of slum dwellers like him is not good, because most people do not see

THERE MAY BE MORE LUCK FOR KIBIRIGE AS AFFCAD PLANS TO SUPPORT SOME OF ITS GRADUATES WITH CAPITAL TO START THEIR OWN BUSINESSES.

"value" in them.

However, he says this only makes him work harder to prove the doubters wrong.

Of youth, for youth

According to Aisha Namaganda, a trainer at BBVI, students are routinely encouraged to follow their passion into gainful employment.

"We always tell our beneficiaries that coming for vocational training is not a curse. Instead, with the hands-on training, they will not have to look for jobs, but create jobs and money is always assured," Namaganda says.

Rose Byakatonda, 20, is the eldest of six orphans. Having lost her father, she dropped out of school in Senior Two due to lack of school fees. She says the EU-funded IOM/AFFCAD project has given her hope. Now studying cookery and bakery, she is producing cakes and

"daddies" which she supplies to retail shops around Bwaise.

"At least, I can make some money and I give some to my mother to look after my brothers and sisters," Byakatonda says.

Besides, AFFCAD founder Muhammed Kisirisa, one of the drivers of AFFCAD is the youthful project officer Farai Mazvimbakupa. She says the organisation tries to secure internships and work placements for its students.

"If the youth cannot still be employed it will leave so many questions; so the end goal is to get as many youth as possible employed," Mazvimbakupa says.

This was echoed by the chief of mission at IOM Uganda, Ali Abdi.

He hailed the support from the European Union Trust Fund, which made the SSCoS project possible. He said the project ties in well with the Government's "Skilling Uganda"

strategic plan, which focuses on demand-led skills development.

"With the support from European Union, the youth in the slums of Kampala will get marketable vocational skills and will be assisted either to find work placements or to launch themselves into self-employment," Abdi said.

During the launch of the SSCoS project in Kampala last October, Ambassador Kristian Schmidt, the head of the European Union Delegation in Uganda, spoke of the need to support slum communities rise above unemployment, frustration and crime.

"The youth in Kampala's slums must not lose hope, nor become stigmatised as radicals," Ambassador Schmidt said. "They deserve support, to unleash their potential, to run a business, get a job or take responsibility for their communities."

Kibirige, whose dream was always to be an engineer, hopes to pursue further studies after this course and set up an electrical workshop of his own.

"The only thing that can stand in my way is lack of capital; but with the skills gained I will by all means succeed."

There may be more luck for Kibirige as AFFCAD plans to support some of its graduates for capital to start their own businesses.