

Promoting Girl Child Education in Busoga Region of Eastern Uganda

Preamble

Busoga region has continued to lag behind other areas across the country in education performance at both primary and post primary levels. Several factors have been attributed to this poor performance ranging from increasing poverty levels at the household level to lack of interest by stakeholders in upholding the once glorifying performance of the region in this sector.

The girl child has been most affected by this trend of events in the region. Alongside this problem are other attendant problems including; low school enrollment and high dropout rates; early marriages, child labour, and high prevalence of diseases and high mortality. The level of the girl child dropping out of schools for labour opportunities in the largely sugar industry has reached critical stages. In Jinja District alone, more than 60% of underage girls and boys are engaging in sugarcane industry to supply labour for sugar cane growing, cutting, collecting and loading onto vehicles to supply these factories. The most affected communities in Jinja District constitute Busedde, Buyengo, Butagaya and Budondo Sub Counties which form the bulk of sugarcane growers in the district. The problem has been on the increase in the other districts in the region of Iganga, Kaliro, Kamuli, Mayuge, Bugiri and parts of Buyende and the nearby Kayunga district.

Busoga region is home to several established sugar factories inter alia including; Kakira Sugar Ltd in Jinja District, Sango Bay Ltd and Mayuge Sugar Industries Ltd in Mayuge District; Sugar and Allied Industries Ltd in Kaliro, Kamuli Sugar Factory in Kamuli District, Kenlon Sugar Factory in Buyende District, Bugiri Sugar Company in Bugiri District, in addition to other sugar factories surrounding the region including SCOUL Sugar and GM Sugar Factories in the neighbouring Buikwe District. This proliferation of sugar factories has come along with it extensive sugarcane growing, now widely practiced across the Busoga region to supply the high demand of sugar cane by these industries. This continues to target children especially the vulnerable girl child to supply labour to the growing industry.

Studies undertaken in Busoga region by UNICEF and African *Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect* [ANPPCAN], showed an 80% of households growing sugarcane in Jinja employing children. Further to this, 7.4% of the children aged between 6 and 16 years were found to be engaged in sugarcane growing and/or had dropped out of school. Forty-five percent of the children aged 10 and 14 years were found to be engaged in

sugarcane growing and attending school at the same time accounting for the corresponding high levels of school absenteeism and/or dropout in these sugarcane growing areas in the region. These studies further indicated a 13.1% of girls of school going age as having been denied access to primary school education as they continue to be held back at home to support the proliferating sugar industry. Households with female children **(30.5%)** attributed domestic work to non-enrolment, compared to households with male children **(19.9%)**. The problem has further been exacerbated by poverty, cultural practices and gender inequality and attitudes to the girl child. Those that stay in school perform poorly at the end of the education cycle due to constant absenteeism as they provide labour at the sugarcane plantations and study at the same time are sexually exploited, or abused and young girls from 13 years are arranged into early marriages. The people of Eastern (Busoga) region still attach low value to education and generally educating a girl child. The purpose of the centre therefore is to raise awareness on the importance of girl child education with an objective of contributing to increased enrollment and retention levels as well as performance.

Our Intervention/Approach

HAF is working in partnership with Jinja District Local Government and Busedde Sub County in Jinja District to advance girl child education in Busoga Region of Eastern Uganda through a series of programs, and establishing a Girl child education centre at Busedde Sub County.

Proposed girl child education centre

The planned girl child centre seeks to address the challenges affecting the girl child and contributing to the high dropout incidences coupled to low enrollments. The centre will act as a base for mobilizing and advocating for minimization and or elimination of child labour, child marriages highlighting associated health problems and costs to the community. The focus is in the sugar growing areas which have seen an increase in the vice. The centre shall be located at Busedde Sub County and will serve the entire Busoga region.

The choice of the location was preempted by the magnitude of the problem in that sub county. Busedde Sub County given its proximity to the Madhvani owned Kakira sugar works has had to face the brunt of this problem more than the other sub counties, though it is slowly taking route across the region. The centre will work as a one stop centre with an aim of offering comprehensive approaches that simultaneously address these ills. Its objective will among others, contribute to the ongoing initiatives of government regarding the girl

child as embedded in both the National Plan and in line with The UN Sustainable Development Goals. The centre aims at bringing on board all key stakeholders especially the sugar industry, government, civil society as well as the communities to address this problem.

Objectives of the Planned centre

1. To act as a knowledge repository with the necessary education materials and literature; internet, and data processing.
2. It will act as an innovation centre for the region targeting and mobilizing successful women across the region to act as examples and motivate the youths.
3. A sensitization and awareness raising centre where different activities will be held to create awareness in sugar growing communities on the importance of girl child education.
4. To promote improved livelihoods among sugar growing communities and showcasing practical methods which improve the economic and social structure of these communities.
5. To sensitize youths on the need for citizenship in sugar growing communities and surrounding environs.
6. To lobby for and avail critical education materials to the critically under privileged girls and vulnerable children in the sugar growing communities.
7. Improve/enhance teacher attitudes and skills to effectively deliver life skills based and gender responsive methodologies.
8. Ensure that adolescent girls are informed and empowered to participate and take on leadership positions within the school and the community and can share their life experiences with others.

Working with local communities, government and other development partners to improve the girl child education in the sugar cane growing communities, the programme intends to closely work with and integrate in its projects other stakeholders including faith based institutions, Lower local governments especially those engaged in the girl child education notably the District Education Office, community development workers, political leadership including the offices of the Resident District Commissioners, Local Council Chairpersons as well as relevant government ministries, departments and agencies in order to utilize and strengthen capacities for all stakeholders in girls education as it is central in upping stakeholders' knowledge, attitudes and skills to appreciate the underlying causes of barriers to girls' education. Intervention in this area of focus include awareness rising on the need for girls' education, clarity on roles of different stakeholders, (Teachers, education

managers, senior women, school counselors, etc), tapping into key spaces of societal conscience such as cultural and political leaders as well as specific focus on male involvement in supporting girls' education. It will therefore working together with other partners integrate other approaches especially community public health, nutrition and involve the cultural institution to fast track the programme.

The desired outcomes; both short and long term include:

- a) An increase in attendance/participation for girls in the targeted schools.
- b) A reduction in the dropout rates for girls in the targeted schools.
- c) Percentage increase in the dropouts who returned to be re admitted into school or non-formal education.
- d) Improved teacher attitudes to the girl child.

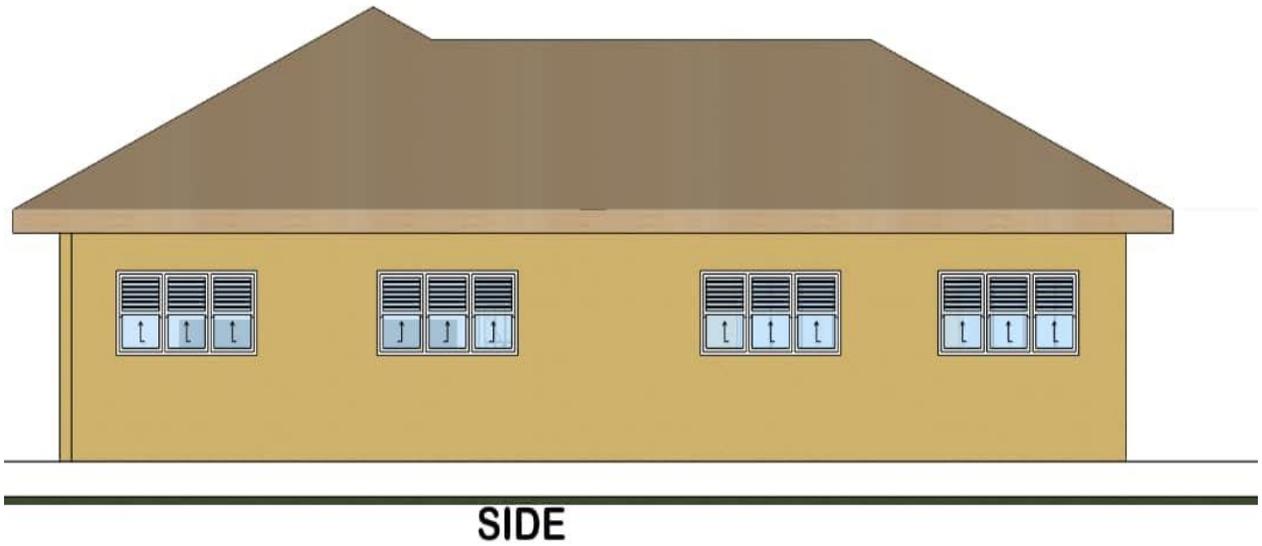
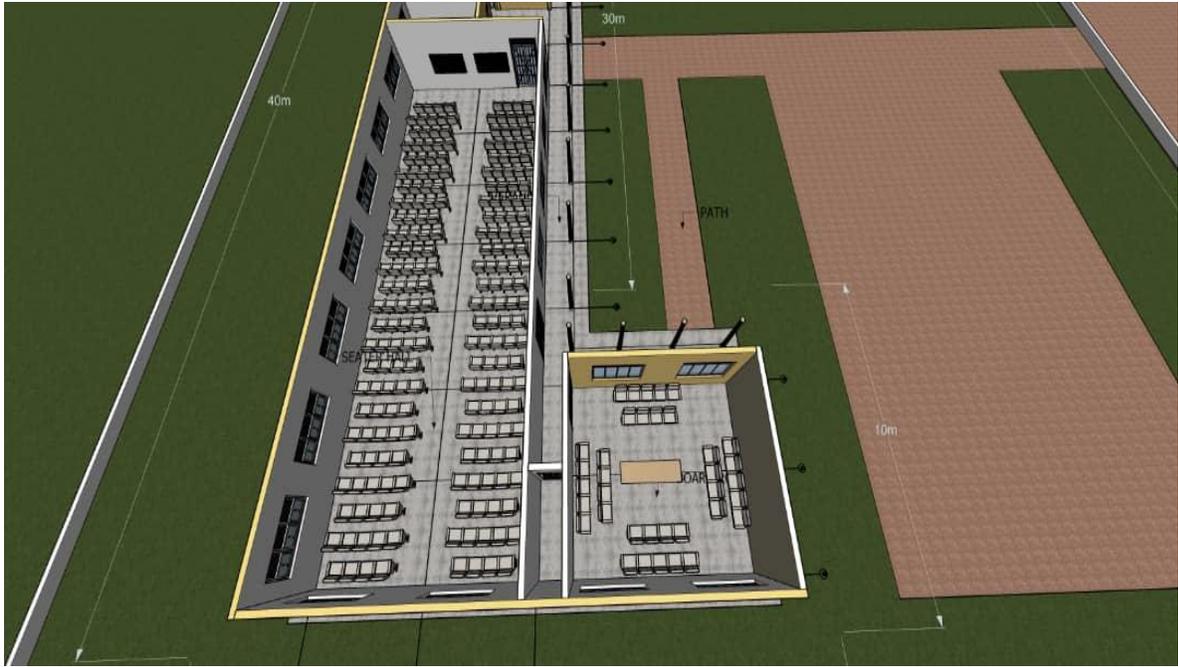
Activities

- Mobilisation of the stakeholders.
- Initial planning and launch of the girl centre in Busedde Sub County.
- Sensitization of communities in Sugar growing communities utilizing a gamut of methodologies.
- Undertaking needs assessment in girl child education in sugar growing communities in Busoga region
- Advocating for the promotion of the girl child education at different fora.
- Creation of and fast tracking round table dialoguing on the issue of the girl child, improvement of education in Busoga region.
- Establishment of peer clubs to promote girl child education in communities and school levels.

Annex 1.

Bird's eye view of the Proposed Girl Child Center





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