



Future4Children Annual Report 2023

Empowering Children in Agago District, Uganda: Education, Nutrition, and Sustainable Community Development

Introduction

The mission of Future4Children to provide marginalized communities with access to education, resources, and opportunities has led to transformative projects worldwide. From running orphanages in China and Moldova to building schools in remote areas like the jungles of the Dominican Republic, Future4Children has left a lasting impact. Initiatives such as vocational training for boys in Bolivia and supporting over 12,000 girls and women to prevent violence in Bolivia highlight our commitment to holistic development.

Background

In the heart of Uganda in an extremely poor region but brimming with hope and potential, Future4Children is making remarkable strides with a series of innovative projects that are transforming lives and landscapes.

This area not only endures the absence of fundamental amenities like electricity, sewage systems, and running water, but is also all compounded by the weight of extreme poverty and climate change.



Baseline study

In September/October 2022, Future4Children conducted a baseline survey in collaboration with the local grassroots organization MYWE-Uganda to assess the overall present situation in the district and determine the most efficient way for a small NGO to have a positive impact. The study highlighted the pressing need for a multifaceted approach to address extreme poverty, education underperformance and gender inequality. Subsequently, Future4Children convened a group consisting of top district authorities, community representatives, and MYWE-Uganda to develop efficient and highly effective rapid scalable initiatives.

The context was dire, and amid these adversities, a critical issue had emerged within primary schools. In the past, parents would contribute modestly to ensure the provision of a simple but sustaining porridge for their children’s lunchtime at school. However, the ravages of poverty and Covid had left these parents financially incapacitated, rendering them unable to make even these modest contributions. Consequently, the once-reliable source of nourishment had disappeared, leaving the school grounds bereft of lunchtime sustenance. This unfortunate turn of events has far-reaching consequences: many children arrived at school on empty stomachs, enduring hunger pangs throughout the day.

This perpetual hunger disrupted their ability to concentrate, attend classes regularly, and, in the most distressing cases, compelled them to drop out of school altogether. The implications for academic performance were stark, as the lack of nourishment and subsequent cognitive struggles led to a profound decline in overall educational achievement.



Meeting with the School Management Committee at Arum Primary School during Future4Children's the first visit in Agago in 2020.

Pilot Projects

In January 2023, Future4Children launched two pilot interventions, based on the findings of baseline studies.

1. Schools

An initial pilot project was deemed prudent to acquire knowledge and subsequently undertake scalable interventions. Consequently, Future4Children initiated a pilot project that targeted 3 schools: the Lacek Primary School with 650 students, Abone Primary School with 760, and Arum Primary School with 730 students.

The aim was twofold:

- to elevate academic performance and attendance rates by infusing a nutrition- and water centred approach, and
- to integrate practical lessons in agriculture and animal husbandry.

In practice, this involved cultivating maize as a staple food, introducing a diverse range of vegetables. Future4Children's providing additional substantial support through seeds, plants, two cows, and a water tank at each school.

By imparting knowledge and techniques related to effective farming practices, these schools not only improve food security but also empower their students with practical skills that can shape their future.

At the centre of this initiative lies a hands-on educational experience that goes beyond the classroom. Children do not just learn about agriculture, - they become informed farmers, nurturing their plots of land. This project serves to impart practical agricultural skills: tilling the soil, planting seeds, and watching their vegetables grow. It is a journey of self-discovery, as they witness the fruits of their labour with their first harvest, instilling a sense of accomplishment and pride.



Students at Arum Primary school participating in the maize cultivation.

Education, Nutrition, and Community Building.

As part of the comprehensive nutrition plan, the two cows at each school have already brought smiles and delight to the children's faces. In about 6 months the cows will be mature enough to provide a reliable source of milk, offering not just nourishment but also companionship and a valuable educational experience on animal husbandry.



Since the harvest of their maize, the children can enjoy a simple lunch each day, consisting of a porridge made from the maize they planted, nurtured, harvested, and processed. Academic performance has shown improvement, with more children attending and staying in school. Though exact data is yet to be established, this progress is evident from observations made by teachers and Future4Children representatives.

Empowering with Essential Resources: Water.

Future4Children donated each school with a 10,000-liter water tank, addressing the critical need for clean drinking water and enabling the children to tend to their vegetable garden with care. This intervention empowers the children with essential resources, imparting the significance of responsible water usage.



The 10,000 water tank at Abone primary school.

2. Female empowerment

a. Income Investment Scheme: empowering mothers directly benefits their children and the entire community.

In 2023, through our innovative pilot project “Income Investment Scheme”, we have witnessed tangible results in all our 3 women groups. This project aims to provide financial support and opportunities for self-sufficiency to these communities.

The process began with a deal, - whatever amount the groups could save collectively for start-up investments, we pledged to match it. Encouraging and assisting them to open bank accounts was the first step in this journey, and we are thrilled with the enthusiasm and effort they have shown to make this initiative a success.

Group N.1 – Di Cwinyi, ventured into beekeeping to produce honey. While their beehives are wild and not in conventional boxes, they are determined to protect these precious insects and safely collect honey: this endeavour not only promises financial gains for the community but also contributes to environmental conservation through beekeeping. They have already collected and sold 39 kilograms of honey, and their long-term goal is to be able to cover their children's school fees while continuing their farming activities.



Group N.2 – BedKigen, focused on buying and selling seeds. Before this initiative, community members had to travel long distances on dusty and potholed roads to purchase seeds from the nearest town, which was 30-40 km away. With no public transport available, renting boda-bodas (motorbike taxis) became an expensive and inconvenient necessity. With their seed business thriving, the burden of long and expensive travels has been alleviated for the entire community.

Group N.3 – Lacek started goat breeding with 11 goats and expanded to 23 by December. The group unanimously agreed to sell some goats to improve finances for expenses, loans, and to expand farming activities, including eggplants, cabbages, onions, maize, and sunflowers.



Group N.4 – Wanglobo, also decided on goat breeding along with a maize cultivation. They have been actively engaged the training sessions focusing on topics such as record-keeping, farming as a business, and counselling on gender-based violence. Through these trainings, they have gained valuable skills and knowledge, particularly regarding the importance of keeping children in school and avoidance of pregnancies.



b. Vegetable gardens

The Women's Vegetable Garden Project has been a transformative initiative, aimed at improving nutrition and providing economic empowerment for the women and their families. By establishing vegetable gardens, the project diversified diets and created new income sources, reducing reliance on staple crops. The Future4Children Project Leader visited each of the four women's groups on a weekly basis and trained them in gardening techniques to overcoming challenges posed by climatic changes through adaptability and resilience.

Despite initial setbacks from unpredictable weather, the initiative successfully enhanced food security and dietary quality. Regular harvests ensured a steady supply of nutritious food, broadening the nutrient intake crucial for health improvements. Furthermore, the project fostered economic empowerment, decreasing dependency on external food sources and enhancing financial stability.

In essence, the Women's Vegetable Garden Project has not only addressed immediate nutritional needs but also empowered women, contributing to their autonomy and long-term community resilience.



2023 Conclusion

Future4Children's initiatives in Uganda's Angago District are emblematic of the organization's unwavering commitment to empowering communities for sustainable development. Despite the dire circumstances in the region, marked by extreme poverty and lack of basic amenities, our innovative projects are fostering transformative change.



Meeting with the Agago District government

From left to right: Nyeko Samuel, Former Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). Dabrine Kagalua, Future4Children Project Coordinator. Oola Gabrieldiel, District Community Development Officer. Ocama Moarish, Vice Chairperson of the Local Council Five. Ojok Samuel Kiteny, District Speaker and Councilor for Lacek Subcounty. Trude Viole Stene, Future4Children Founder and President. Esther Aryemo, the District Education Officer. Omara Miria, District Councilor for Arum Subcounty. Openyith Frank, *Principal Assistant Secretary*.

Through our 2023 pilot project targeting **primary schools**, we addressed the critical issue of hunger among students by infusing a nutrition-centred approach and integrating lessons in agriculture and animal husbandry. By providing essential resources and continuous training, we empower students with practical skills while elevating academic performance and attendance rates.

The Income Investment Scheme is **empowering women** and their communities, fostering financial stability and self-sufficiency. From beekeeping to seed businesses and goat breeding, these initiatives not only promise financial gains but also contribute to environmental conservation and food security. By empowering mothers to take charge of their economic well-being, we indirectly invest in the future of their children.

Plans for 2024

Children: The next phase of our project aims to improve the learning environment by expanding classroom space, building on-site dormitories, stocking libraries, revamping playgrounds, and introducing diverse music programs. Additionally, we will continue the nutrition program to ensure students have access to balanced meals, promoting better health and cognitive development, ultimately enhancing their overall educational experience and academic performance.



Wanglobo Primary School class room

Girls: The project aims to construct hygienic toilet facilities in four primary schools in Agago District, Northern Uganda, with a focus on improving health, hygiene, and privacy, particularly for girls, to enhance their school attendance and education. The expected outcomes include improved health and hygiene practices, increased girls' attendance, boosted self-esteem and confidence. conducive learning environment, benefiting approximately 2,500 pupils and positively impacting the broader community.



Proposed toilet facilities for each of the three schools

Female empowerment: In 2024 Future4Children expanding our female empowerment efforts with a robust microfinance program and an innovative agroforestry initiative. By providing access to credit and financial training, the microfinance program will enable women to start and grow their own businesses, fostering economic independence. Concurrently, the agroforestry initiative will introduce women to sustainable farming practices, combining crop cultivation with tree planting to enhance food security and environmental health.



Lacek women's group, welcoming Future4Children in June 2023

Summary

As we conclude our 2023 Annual Report, Future4Children reflects on a year of meaningful impact and forward momentum in the Agago District, Uganda. Through our dedicated initiatives in education, nutrition, and female empowerment, we have laid the groundwork for lasting change and community resilience. Moving into 2024, we remain committed to our mission of empowering the next generation and fostering sustainable development for a brighter future.

