

CSC Evaluation and Monitoring Programme

Promoting Child-Centred Education in Rural Uganda and Reducing Unemployment in Vulnerable Communities

Constance Nyamikola



According to UNESCO, Uganda like many other African countries is facing a learning crisis, with around 83% of children not able to read and understand an age-appropriate text by the age of 10. The term for this is 'learning poverty', and it is caused partly by children being out of school but mostly comes from poor education in schools. Poor learning outcomes increases the likelihood of dropping out of school.

High school dropout rates in Uganda's Tororo District result in unemployment and concerning levels of child marriages, with 20% of all girls below the age of 18 years married off. A 2020 USAID Partnership to Accelerate Entrepreneurship (PACE) report estimated that five girls drop out of school for every three boys, and 28% of girls aged 15-19 years have given birth while having no means to support themselves.

It is against this background that Constance Nyamikola, a 2013 Commonwealth Scholar, founded the Tororo Youth Initiative for Professional Development (TYIPD). Inspired by her learning and classroom experience in the United Kingdom while studying for her Master's in Education Leadership, Policy and Development at the University of Bristol, Constance established the TYIPD teacher training programme, which introduces current best classroom practices to primary schools in Ugandan rural areas. It focuses on interactive and child-centred teaching techniques which do not reach teachers in remote schools due to the lack of professional development opportunities available to them.

For those students who have dropped out of school, Constance devised a business development programme in partnership with Street Business School to train youth and vulnerable women in establishing and running micro-businesses to be able to financially support themselves.

Constance's Commonwealth Scholarship played an important role in enabling her to support vulnerable members of Tororo community to secure livelihoods. She uses knowledge she gained during her studies to introduce the best classroom techniques to the most disadvantaged schools in Uganda, ensuring that more children are engaged in learning and are less likely to drop out of school.



Organising teacher training for schools in refugee camps.



Constance Nyamikola is a Commonwealth Shared Scholarship Alumni who completed her Master's in Education Leadership, Policy and Development at the University of Bristol in 2013. Constance is the Founder and CEO of Tororo Youth Initiative for Professional Development (TYIPD), an organisation dedicated to professional development of teachers and training vulnerable members of communities in business skills to enable them to earn their living. Prior to founding her NGO, Constance worked in the humanitarian and non-governmental sectors dedicated to supporting communities living in extreme poverty.

Introducing Child-Centred Teaching to Rural Primary Schools

Having devoted her entire career to improving education in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, Constance held teaching and administrative roles at a rural primary school after her undergraduate studies in English and Religious Education at Ndejje University in Uganda. As a teacher in a rural school, Constance did not have access to the same resources and professional development opportunities that were available to teachers in large cities and urban areas. She felt that she needed more exposure to the latest developments in classroom good practices, and this is when she learned about the professional development programme offered by the British Council to teachers from Uganda. Through this programme, Constance visited schools in the UK to observe and learn about the most effective teaching methods as evidenced by the latest research.



Constance delivering teacher training.

Constance completed three such visits over time, after which she decided to further her education in a more formal and substantial way by applying for a Master's programme at the University of Bristol. With the support of a Commonwealth Scholarship, Constance completed her MEd in Education Leadership, Policy and Development in 2013. She believes that her studies were transformative for her career.

'My career trajectory has been shaped by my Scholarship. Looking back at where I was and where I am now makes me believe that I have made tremendous achievements due to my Scholarship.'

Previously, I wouldn't mind reading and searching for more information, but due to the exposure I got during my Scholarship tenure, I got to realise the relevancy of reading and eliciting for developmental knowledge.'

Upon completing her studies, Constance returned to Uganda and worked as a Senior Field Officer for Redearth Education, an organisation delivering primary school teacher training. She led a programme which worked with teachers and school leaders to equip them with the skills and confidence they need to deliver a high-quality education and foster lifelong learning attitudes in children. Utilising the 'training of trainers' model, Constance supported 35 lead teachers and headteachers, helping them develop their professional and leadership skills to then cascade their knowledge to other teachers in their schools. Several schools were changed as a result of this initiative, moving from foundation and bronze to silver and gold levels, which is in line with the Redearth Education assessment criteria used for certification of achievements. Learnings from the programme were presented by Redearth to the Minister of Education and Sports of Uganda to incorporate this innovation into the national curriculum, thus scaling the programme nationally.

'We would feel a number of guests coming in from the Ministry of Education to visit our offices and also to where we were working and looking at what we would call good practices of teaching and trying to scale out to other parts of the country, which was very, very interesting.'

The programme had a transformative effect on introducing child-centred learning in Uganda, especially in rural schools deprived of resources usually available in more centrally located schools.

'If you go to rural places, the teachers are in their own ways of teaching. But the modules we trained, basically, focused on good practices of teaching, engaging the pupils, making sure that they are enjoying the learning, and making sure that you, the teacher, are very exemplary in all ways. You are very friendly to the children ... you make them motivated, and you are also engaging the community and the parents in the whole teaching and learning process.'



Lead teacher development training at Redearth Education.

The Redearth Education programme helped to reduce student dropout rates by incentivising more children to continue learning. This was because new interactive methods of teaching introduced by the programme made learning more enjoyable, with students acquiring knowledge rather than training for exams. Constance believes that her experience while on the Commonwealth Scholarship directly contributed to introducing this shift to primary school classrooms in Uganda.

‘When I was in Bristol, I experienced different scenarios, and every scenario, for me, was a learning point. One of the things that really struck me was the way I was engaged during the teaching and learning process. Being in a Bristol classroom, for me, changed my mindset. I think I carried with me all the practices that I saw, beginning from how I was engaged, questioned and expected to respond, and made to learn in groups with my colleagues, and not left alone to think, and then put my own idea and justify my point and make sure that I can support it using evidence.’

The programme was so successful that it was extended internationally to Zimbabwe, where Constance trained School Inspectors and District Educational Officers.

Nurturing the Next Generation of Change Leaders to Transform Education Ecosystems in Uganda

From Redearth Education Constance moved to work as a Head of Training and Support at Teach for Uganda, a non-profit organisation that nurtures a new generation of change leaders who would be committed to advancing equitable access to quality education in Uganda. This was achieved by recruiting top university graduates from all academic backgrounds and placing them for two years as full-time teachers in low income government-aided primary schools to drastically improve children’s learning and life outcomes while developing their leadership skills.



Leadership Development at Teach for Uganda.

As a Head of Training and Support, Constance oversaw programme strategy, design and execution, including training newly recruited fellows in hands-on leadership and pedagogical skills to become effective teachers and lifelong leaders who are deeply rooted in the communities they serve.

‘My role was to nurture [the fellows] to love and care for children in a public primary classroom. We were training them on how to adjust to the education space, how to feel that they can belong to that kind of environment.’



Training at Teach for Uganda.

While at Teach for Uganda, Constance personally trained, supervised, and certified two cohorts of fellow leaders who were placed in more than 150 remote rural schools in various districts, reaching around 75,000 children overall. These schools would normally struggle to attract highly qualified teachers because they do not offer the same professional development and career progression opportunities as more centrally located urban schools. This creates a considerable gap between performance in urban versus rural schools. Teach for Uganda is reducing this gap by offering high-quality professional development and leadership skills training to fellows, making these placements an attractive career option.



Teacher training activities at Teach for Uganda.

Another initiative Constance contributed to while with Teach for Uganda was reaching out to children affected by war through the War Child Holland charity. As a Head of Training, she was leading the implementation of the education project in a refugee camp in northern Uganda, where she provided affected children and teachers with technology and training on how to use it. This project enabled the continued education of displaced children within the camps.



Constance with Leadership Development Fellows at Teach for Uganda.

Initiating Tororo Youth Initiative for Professional Development to Combat Unemployment and Poverty

After Constance witnessed the devastating impact Covid-19 pandemic had on the education and graduation rates of students, she set up the Tororo Youth Initiative for Professional Development (TYIPD) in 2021. A USAID PACE report published in 2020 showed that after the pandemic the Tororo district had the highest rates of school dropouts and pregnancies of under-aged girls, with 28% of 15- to 19-year-olds giving birth while having no means to support themselves. There were no government interventions to support the affected population, therefore Constance founded TYIPD and initiated a three-pronged programme dedicated to the empowerment and skilling of young people, professional development of teachers, and business entrepreneurship training for marginalised women and girls.



Graduation from TYIPD/Street Business school training.

The first strand of Tororo Youth Initiative addresses the needs of Ugandan youth who were unable to finish the final years of their education due to the pandemic and school closures. The programme includes training in skills which are needed in the local workforce, such as welding, carpentry, sewing, hairdressing, and construction. It also teaches how to run sustainable micro-businesses, which can empower young people to take charge of their own life and have a brighter future.

From its foundation to date, 147 young people in different parts of Tororo have graduated from the TYIPD skills training programme and are all running small businesses in their communities. Currently TYIPD is training 100 young people in different parts of Tororo who will graduate in November 2024. The target of the initiative is to train 1,000 young people from vulnerable groups in the next five years.



Constance delivering TYIPD business training.

Constance felt that the most significant change to the local communities or beyond due to her Scholarship had been building the capacity of teachers in Uganda and empowering vulnerable youth and women.

‘The current work of TYIPD as a national organisation focuses on capacity building for teachers in Uganda, and empowering vulnerable youths and women through skilling and social and business entrepreneurship. I believe this work is contributing tremendously towards the development of the Ugandan economy by supporting and reaching out to the neediest group of people who hardly receive support from the government.

Our work is planned to reach 1,000 vulnerable youths from deprived communities on skilling and business entrepreneurship, and training teachers on an annual basis.’

Another strand of TYIPD is focusing on capacity building for teachers in Uganda. To date, 35 teachers from 35 schools in Tororo district have received training in good practices of teaching and learning to curb the high rate of school dropouts. Constance believes that having good teaching practice in place is the key to preventing young people from dropping out of school.

'I thought our system lacks something that we collectively have got to contribute to improve it. Our teachers in rural areas up to now still teach using traditional methods, and there is a very huge gap between the children studying in Kampala which is the capital city of Uganda and the rural areas. Also, having been a culprit before my Scholarship tenure, I noticed I needed to offer a hand and share my knowledge with the wider scope.'

The third strand of the project trains vulnerable women in business and entrepreneurship skills to start a small business and lift them out of poverty. These women lived on less than 1USD per day or less, however after completing TYIPD programme they all started micro-businesses and are now able to financially support themselves and their families. To date, 85 young mothers have been trained and certified in business entrepreneurship and setting up a start-up.

'I think that a three-pronged approach that I try to use is actually solving a number of problems right now in my community and also in the other communities that we work with through Tororo Youth Initiative for Professional Development.'



Teacher leadership training at TYIPD.

The youth training programme is delivered by a group of 14 volunteers while Constance is focusing on teacher training by herself. She needs support with teacher training since more schools are inviting TYIPD, but Constance is unable to reach them without additional support. While Constance was able to partner with Street Business to deliver the women's business entrepreneurship and skilling strand of TYIPD, she struggled to attract funding for hiring support for teacher training programmes. This has been the major challenge, preventing the expansion of her training to more schools in need.

Constance considers that the most significant change to her personally from her Commonwealth Scholarship are the skills and confidence she acquired:

Because of the Scholarship Constance felt confident to establish a national NGO. She says she would not take such a risk before.

'I consider this to be very significant because I decided to take a risk of founding a national NGO - something I would hardly do before my Scholarship. In Uganda currently the needs of the youths and vulnerable people are not taken into account and their voices are never heard. So, I felt a section of Uganda's growing population was being neglected and of course they are the future leaders of the country.'

Constance highlights leadership and commitment to serve as the most valuable skills acquired from the Scholarship in helping her to organise community support interventions:

'I have become good at leadership. In this sense, my leadership style is very participatory and offers an opportunity for everyone to get involved in the process of administration. Prior to my Scholarship, I was exposed to a very authoritative leadership where I observed dictatorship rather than leadership.'

'[Also], being able to listen to people appropriately and be there for others. Because from my Scholarship, I learned one thing: service.'

You have been supported, and you need to go out and support other people as well, and that is giving yourself to others regardless of what you are going through. The passion that I have, I think for me, has been rooted in my Scholarship experiences, which also increased my ability to identify problems and find ways of solving such problems.'

Mentoring Commonwealth Scholarship Scholars and Plans for Future

For the past few years, in addition to her NGO activities, Constance has been passing her knowledge and experience to the next generation of CSC Scholars by mentoring them during their studies in the UK.

Through her experiences on the CSC Mentoring Programme, Constance has developed her professional skills whilst sharing her expertise to support her Mentees to work towards their development impact goals.

She is also an active member of the CSC Alumni community which helps her to maintain and enhance her international professional network.

In the future Constance would like to continue her studies through pursuing PhD. However, she is keen to ensure that TYIPD can run sustainably and continue to support Tororo communities and schools before she embarks on the new journey.

More about the work of Constance Nyamikola

[Tororo Youth Initiative for professional Development \(TYIPD\)](#)

[Redearth Education](#)

[Teach for Uganda](#)

[Zimkids](#)

[Constance Nyamikola - Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK](#)

Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK

Woburn House

20-24 Tavistock Square , London WC1H 9HF

Email: evaluation@cscuk.org.uk

Website: cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/csc-evaluation/