

Life skills equip children and parents to navigate everyday challenges, build healthier relationships, and make informed decisions.

BY ANTHONY WESAKA

Inside a modest grocery shop, 19-year-old Godwin Tumukunde carefully measures salt for a customer. A few metres behind the shop, his younger sister, Patience Ainomugisha, mops the family home.

It is an ordinary scene, but for their father, Mr Francis Turyamureeba, it represents an extraordinary shift.

"Before, children would just wait to be served," he says. "Now they take responsibility, and even if something happens to me, I am not worried about my businesses."

Tumukunde, a Senior Six leaver, attributes the change to life skill lessons introduced earlier this year.

"So many things have changed," he says, handing over change to a customer. "We are closer to our parents. They teach us how to manage their businesses, and we no longer depend on them for everything. We can think on our own."

His sister Ainomugisha, 17, a Senior Four leaver agrees. She proudly lists the skills she has acquired: cooking, washing utensils, cleaning, and organising the home.

"Even if mummy and the househelp are not around, I know I won't go hun-

New programme improves children-parents relations



Godwin Tumukunde hands over merchandise to a customer. PHOTO/ANTHONY WESAKA

gry or live in a dirty environment," she says, smiling.

For Mr Turyamureeba, the trans-

formation began in May when Uwezo Uganda and ALiVE introduced a 10-week life-skills programme targeting

parents and children in the area.

One lesson encouraged parents to engage more closely with schools. Acting on this, he visited his son's teachers to better understand his academic challenges.

"We identified areas where he needed support, and he improved," he recounts. "He became number one in his class, earned a bursary, and I will no longer pay Shs1.5m in school fees. The life skills we learnt as parents are paying off."

As the Local Council 1 Chairperson, Mr Turyamureeba says the impact extends beyond his household.

"Parent-child conflicts in this area have reduced significantly," he says. "There is more peace."

The programme has also inspired economic cooperation. Together with other parents, he formed a savings group where members save at least Shs10,000 every Friday, an initiative already improving household stability.

For Ms Dinah Kyomugisha, a single mother of six, the lessons prompted deep personal reflection.

"When you are a single mother, everything is on you," she says. "I was very bitter and quarrelsome."

Life skills training taught her patience, empathy, and respect for children's rights, lessons she admits were initially uncomfortable.

"Some of my children used to wet the bed, and I would beat them. Now I understand their rights. I instruct them to wash the bedding instead. My children now welcome me with smiles when I return from work," she says. "They love the new me."

In May, Uwezo, in partnership with ALiVE, conducted community dialogues in Sheema, Tororo, Oyam, Kanungu, Kampala, and Mukono, focusing on nurturing these skills at home, in school, and communities.

A key emphasis was problem-solving, a skill many young people lack. Over 10 weeks, parents, guardians, and caregivers engaged in weekly discussions on how to model and support this skill among children.

For families like the Turyamureebas, the lessons have bridged generational gaps, replacing conflict with cooperation.

Ms Faridah Nassereka, ALiVE's Systems Shift coordinator in Uganda and a senior programme officer at Uwezo Uganda, explains that after reflecting on low life skills proficiency among young people in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, ALiVE set out to engage parents and communities, particularly to strengthen problem-solving skills.

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