

# Disability Inclusion

## insight series

### Disability inclusion in **rural apprenticeships**

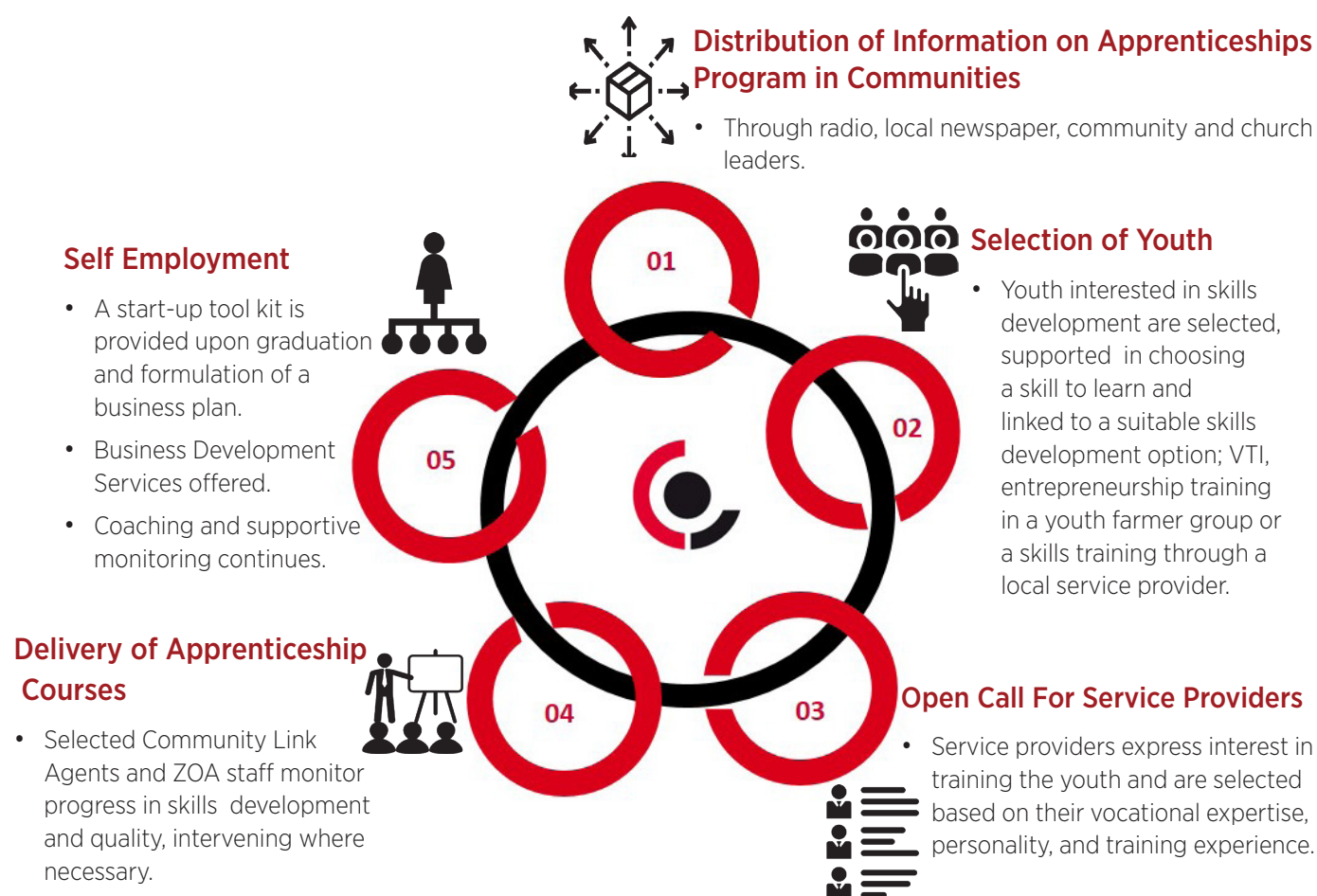
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#### Earning while learning!

Youth with disabilities in northern Uganda experience considerable challenges while accessing mainstream vocational education due to various personal and social limitations, besides facing poverty. The majority have a low educational background and their individual capacities are hardly recognised. The persistent perception of not being “employable”, leads to social isolation and very low self-esteem. Without any skills, the chances of making money and/or getting a paid job are limited.

The SEE Acholi programme (Skilling Employment and Entrepreneurship, 2016-2018) implemented by ZOA Uganda in partnership with Christian Counselling Fellowship and funded by the European Union aimed at reaching vulnerable youth in northern Uganda, preparing them to become resilient actors in the local economy. One of the components of the programme is based on skills training and entrepreneurship development through an apprenticeships approach.

# The apprenticeships approach



## The match between rural apprenticeships and tackling barriers to inclusion in SEE Acholi:

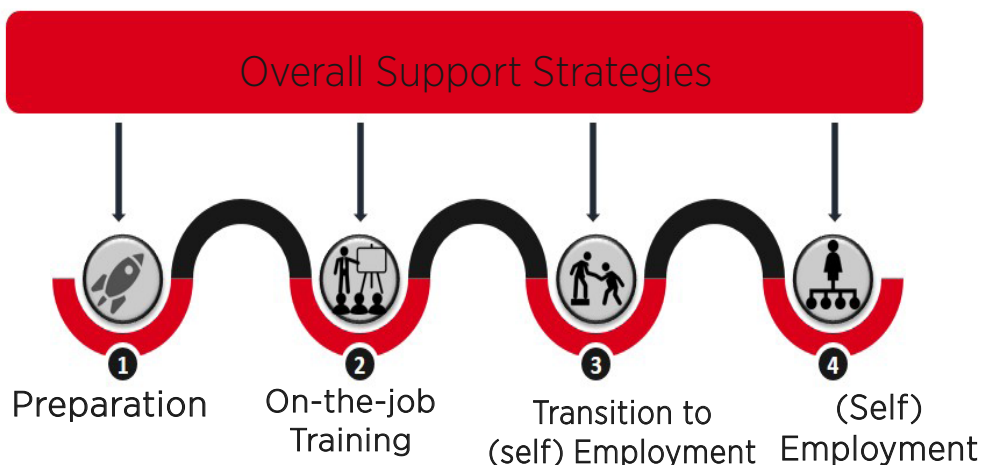
ZOA partnered with Light for the World for technical support on the inclusion of youth with disabilities in the apprenticeship approach within the SEE Acholi program. With efforts on disability inclusion, local youth with disabilities would have equal access and opportunity to participate in an apprenticeship course of their choice. ZOA learned that the apprenticeships approach, as compared to enrolment in a vocational training institute, provided particular benefits to local youth with disabilities.

These benefits included;

- **Learning skills while staying close to home:** Generally safer for the youth. Daily care from family members and participation in daily chores is sustained.
- **Earning while learning:** Some service providers give the youth an allowance during their apprenticeship, offering them an opportunity to earn while learning.
- **Learning skills in one's own community:** By demonstrating their ability to work to local customers, social inclusion is fostered.
- **Less financial contribution from the family:** As students commute from home, there is no need to buy soap, storage box, toiletries, food or any other utensils that some vocational training institutions usually require from resident students.
- **Small numbers enabling better supervision and learning:** Since apprenticeship providers enrol small groups of students at a time, it is easier to tailor the course to meet any special needs.

## Disability Inclusion in practice

To support and mainstream the apprenticeship placements for youth with disabilities, the SEE Acholi program carried out various support interventions grouped per phase.



### Overall Support Strategies

Throughout the apprenticeships, youth with disabilities were given extra coaching by local Community Link Agents (CLAs). CLAs provided moral support to the youth to pursue their vocational ambitions and discussed on-the-job challenges. Parents of these youth were visited frequently which proved crucial in reducing drop-outs.

Role models with disabilities were also introduced at various stages to support career guidance. These role models served as inspiration to the students through sharing personal stories of strife and success in opening businesses of their own.

## **Make it work! Tips on overall support in apprenticeship programs:**

- Utilize existing tools and assessments on disability inclusion available through specialist Disability and Development organisations to foster better understanding of the needs of persons with disabilities.
- At the start of each program phase, reflect on program design and activities with a disability inclusive lens. This will help in identifying potential barriers, formulating action points and catering for adjustments at each phase.
- Develop innovative ways of continuously monitoring disability inclusion. Documentation of experiences, success stories and lessons learned helps to improve interventions.
- Enrolment of youth with disabilities can be difficult due to attitudinal barriers. As a result, it may take time to get them fully engaged. This time frame should be taken into account during program design.

## **Preparation Phase**

Community Link Agents (CLAs) reached out to communities to identify youth with disabilities and offer them the opportunity to join the program.

During home visits, career guidance was provided to manage expectations of the youth. CLAs also mediated talks between the youth and their parents on available course options matching their interests.

In this phase, service providers were also prepared to adequately support youth with disabilities. They were sensitized on disability and given clear instructions to ensure that they could and would match the learning and emotional needs of their students with disabilities.

“The trainers need to know how to deal with youth with disabilities. If not, you will find them dropping out or getting away to do other things. Some of these youth will come with their personal challenges from home and because they become rather reserved, it might feel rude to the teachers. If we do not prepare the service providers well, they will just give up on them (youth with disabilities) in the beginning.”  
Joyce Patricia Okwir, ZOA Uganda

## **Make it work! Tips on preparation phase in apprenticeship programs:**

- Consult Disabled People's Organisations in your target areas to help identify and reach youth with disabilities.
- Disability awareness trainings are necessary for field workers and service providers to become more effective in working and communicating with youth with disabilities.
- Gathering detailed data on youth with disabilities participating in your program such as type and level of impairment as well as exploring the home situation (level of family support) ensures that support can be tailored to the needs of the individual.
- It is recommended to organise sensitisation meetings for the whole community to increase disability awareness and create an enabling environment for these youth.

## On-the-Job Training

The main goal of this phase is to prevent drop-outs and maximize the effectiveness of the skill development process. Peer support turned out to be highly relevant in making youth with disabilities feel more comfortable. Also, a solid relationship based on trust between the service provider and the youth set a good pace for gradual development of skills.

Service providers sensitised other youth on types of disabilities and needs of youth with disabilities. These efforts helped to remove attitudinal and communication barriers in the group.

ZOA assigned Sign Language Interpreters to each service provider training youth with hearing impairments to ease communication in the first weeks of training. Extra individual attention was also given to students with hearing impairments to prevent drop-outs and promote their social inclusion.

“At first when I came here, the other students were not treating me well. Later, when I told my teacher about my disability, the teacher shared this with the group. They started treating me really well. If a customer comes, the other students help me by saying, “The customer is calling you!”  
- Anna\*, student (hard of hearing) learning hairdressing



Anna (R) and Stella\*(L), her service provider

*\*names have been changed*

### Make it work! Tips on On-the-Job Training

- Support service providers with a basic and tailor-made disability awareness training on how to communicate with youth with disabilities. Encourage service providers enrolling youth with hearing impairments to learn some basic sign language.
- As done in VTIs, organise visitation days for family members to check on the progress of the student. This not only strengthens relations between service providers and families of students but also enhances family support for youth with disabilities after graduation.
- Be flexible in setting the training period for apprenticeship trainings. Some youth with disabilities will need a longer period of training, particularly those with hearing, intellectual or visual impairments.
- Invest in frequent support visits to students with hearing impairments by a professional sign language interpreter, especially during the first four weeks of training.

## Transition to self-employment

Graduates that came up with business plans were provided with start-up kits containing essential materials and tools. Aside from practical usefulness, the start-up kits boosted confidence of the students in their ability to start their own businesses.

During the course, a small capital sum was built up through compulsory savings deducted from the weekly allowance. The total sum accumulated was released upon graduation to act as start-up capital for the student's business.

As apprenticeships often took place in the community where the student came from, they had the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to provide good quality services to other community members. This helped in building relationships between potential local customers and the skilled graduates with disabilities and eased the difficult route to (self) employment.

"I saw Brian\* change from day one compared to today. At first, he would show fear to stay with us. Brian would stay alone, or sit alone. He did not look happy. Slowly, I tried to bring him closer. I gave him a little bit more attention. After some time, he joined us. It took him a month to get used to us and his new daily environment". - Service provider of Brian, a student with hearing impairment, learning auto repairs.



Brian\*, during his apprenticeship in the auto repair shop

*\*names have been changed*

### Tips on supporting transition to self-employment after apprenticeships

- Consider organising fairs or exhibitions to showcase products made and/ or skills learned by the graduates from your program. This will kick-start customer relationship building and assist in establishing a local market for the budding entrepreneurs.
- Plan for business coaching and support youth with disabilities on choosing best locations for their businesses.



## Self-employment Phase

Upon completion of apprenticeships, students were supported on their journey to self-employment through mentorship and business coaching.

Youth with disabilities in particular were aided in making informed decisions on where to establish their businesses, whether in- or outside their communities. Besides knowing their market and customer segments, being able to count on peer-support and close business-to-business networks is highly important for aspiring business owners.

Many parents expected their son or daughter to remain engaged in home-based economic and livelihood activities. The family's need for immediate generation of income and food security often overruled the business development path. The best way forward was for the graduated youth to learn to balance their (vocational skills based) businesses with the agricultural practices and livelihood activities of their families.

### Make it work!

### Tips on supporting self-employment ventures

- Monitor youth with disabilities regularly post-training. This will enable them stay on course and handle challenges they may face while trying to establish their businesses.
- Encourage parents to arrange a location for the business as an additional condition for receiving the start-up kit. This will enhance their support on business development for the individual.

Apprenticeship trainings have a positive impact on youth with disabilities from marginalized rural areas in Uganda. Students report positive change while focussing on their ability to work and earn an income to support their families. Earning money not only reduces the daily financial struggle of their families but also has an immense positive effect on self-esteem, respect from parents and community members and social inclusion in general. The “spin-off effects” of self-reliance count for all youth but for youth with disabilities, these are crucial ingredients for their future wellbeing and survival.

## For more information:

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The SEE (Skilling, Employment and Entrepreneurship) Acholi programme was implemented from 2016 till 2018, by ZOA Uganda in partnership with Christian Counselling Fellowship (CCF) with funding from the European Union. For a more detailed report on disability inclusion in apprenticeship training, contact: [uganda@zoa.ngo](mailto:uganda@zoa.ngo)



The Disability Inclusion Insight Series is a series developed by Light for the World. The series shows different approaches taken by organisations on disability inclusion in economic empowerment, providing inspiration and practical support to development professionals in their endeavours to make disability inclusion happen within the designs of current and future programs.

This Insight Brief is funded by National Community Lottery Fund through the Livelihoods Improvement Challenge Project, under the Make 12.4% Work Initiative. The Initiative brings together key stakeholders to create enabling conditions for inclusive economic growth and allowing persons with disabilities to fully access the job market.

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