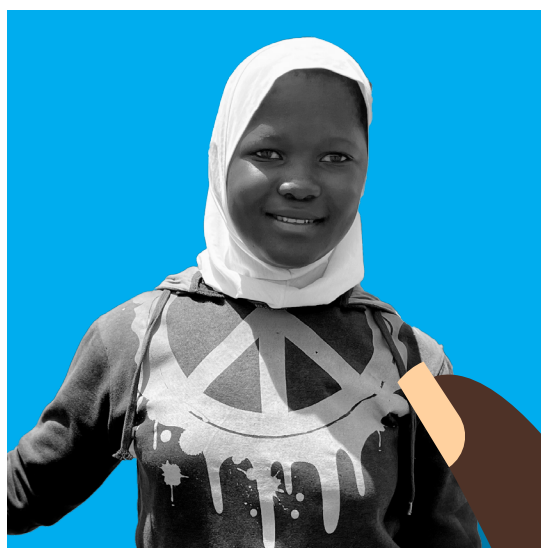
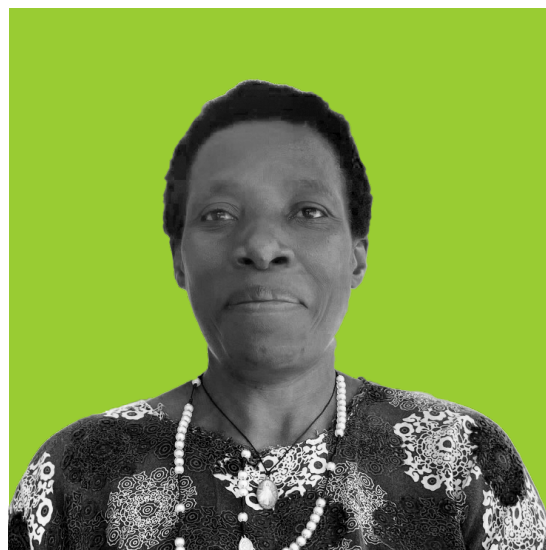


# *In their Own Words*

A collection of powerful narratives told by participants of the Prevention of Violence against Children and Young People (PVAC) program in Uganda.





**Children's Rights and  
Violence Prevention Fund**

**Ending Violence, Building Power**

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# AT A GLANCE

## AT- A GLANCE

*This story booklet is a collection of impactful narratives that illustrate the transformation that has occurred as a result of the Prevention of Violence against Children and Young People (PVAC) program activities in Uganda. PVAC is one of the programs implemented by Children's Rights and Violence Prevention Fund's (CRVPF) community partners.*

*It includes stories from an array of program participants, including our partners who work tirelessly to implement program interventions that are aimed at preventing violence in homes, schools and communities, young people in the out-of-school youth clubs, community-based facilitators, students involved in the "safe schools" initiative of the program, parents who attend weekly parenting meetings, and countless others who have been impacted by the program.*

## PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (PVAC)

*Prevention of Violence Against Children and Young People (PVAC) is one of CRVPF's three core programs, dedicated to ensuring that children and young people live in secure and enabling environments, free from violence and sexual violence.*

*The program adopts a holistic approach by implementing violence-preventative strategies in homes, schools, and communities—the three primary settings where violence often occurs.*

*Targeted at parents, children, young people, teachers, community members and several others, these strategies aim at enhancing parenting skills and practices, fostering healthier spousal relationships, augmenting household incomes, cultivating safe school environments, establishing secure spaces for out-of-school youth, and fortifying both informal and formal community support structures.*

## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION FUND (CRVPF)

*CRVPF is a child rights and social justice regional intermediary organization that partners with community organizations to prevent violence and sexual violence against children and young people, building their power to make the right choices and decisions, and facilitating safe and dignified employment opportunities. CRVPF operates in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia.*

*CRVPF supports more than 250 community partners to implement three programs: Prevention of Violence Against Children and Young People (PVAC), Empowering Youth through Data and Community Development (EYDCD) and Adolescent Girls Power Program (AGPP).*





## IN NUMBERS

From 2021 to 2023

11,884

Parents participated in weekly savings and lending meetings to increase household incomes.

134

Peer mentors trained to facilitate and impart life skills during out-of-school youth club sessions

13,477

Parents trained to strengthen their skills in parenting and improve their spousal relationships.

3,828

Young people attending weekly out of school youth clubs.

418

Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) groups formed by parents

37,800

Children participating in weekly child-led activities conducted in schools



## ANSWERING THE CALL

About two and a half years ago, the LC1 (local councillor) in my area approached me. She told me about a program aiming to prevent violence against children and young people in Nagojje, Luweero, where I live. She explained that one approach the program was taking to prevent violence was to improve parental-child interactions.

The LC1 then asked if I'd attend a one-week training to learn how to share this parenting component with other parents and become referred to as a Community-Based Facilitator (CBF). I gladly agreed. As a parent of four, grandmother of one, and longtime resident of Nagojje, I met the criteria of a CBF.

For the last two years, I've worked as a CBF, facilitating weekly

# STORY 1

## Harriet Namisango

meetings with parents and caregivers. During these meetings, I explain to them a variety of topics about parenting, including how to strengthen the bond between them and their children. I suggest practical ways to do so, such as spending a few minutes a day chatting with their child. Initially, I encountered parents who claimed they had no time for their children.

I stressed that through these conversations, they can learn whether their child is happy, experiencing something difficult, or anything else. I cautioned them that if they remain silent and their child is facing something significant, they may never discover it, which could result in dire consequences.

### COOKING FOR BOYS

Furthermore, I facilitate sessions about discipline. In the beginning, I found that many parents believed that hitting or yelling at their children was the only way to discipline them. Through the program, I've shown parents that non-violent methods of discipline exist, such as calmly discussing a child's misbehavior with them.

In addition, I educate parents about gender roles. Some parents used to think that their sons should not be allowed to cook simply because they are boys, but I explained to them that duties should not be segregated by gender; girls are just as capable of performing as boys.

### BREAKING BAD

I've witnessed significant changes in the parents I've shared this program with. A man, for example, used to hit his children, including those who were babies, with a large stick. However, he reformed after attending several parenting meetings, including those that focused on teaching parents about alternative methods of discipline.

Today, he no longer engages in this behavior. Additionally, I observed a mother who struggled with alcohol misuse to the point where her children were neglected and their most fundamental requirements were not met.

We secured assistance for her addiction through a church and enrolled her in the parenting program. She maintains a sober lifestyle and a positive rapport with her children at present.

### SELF REFLECTION

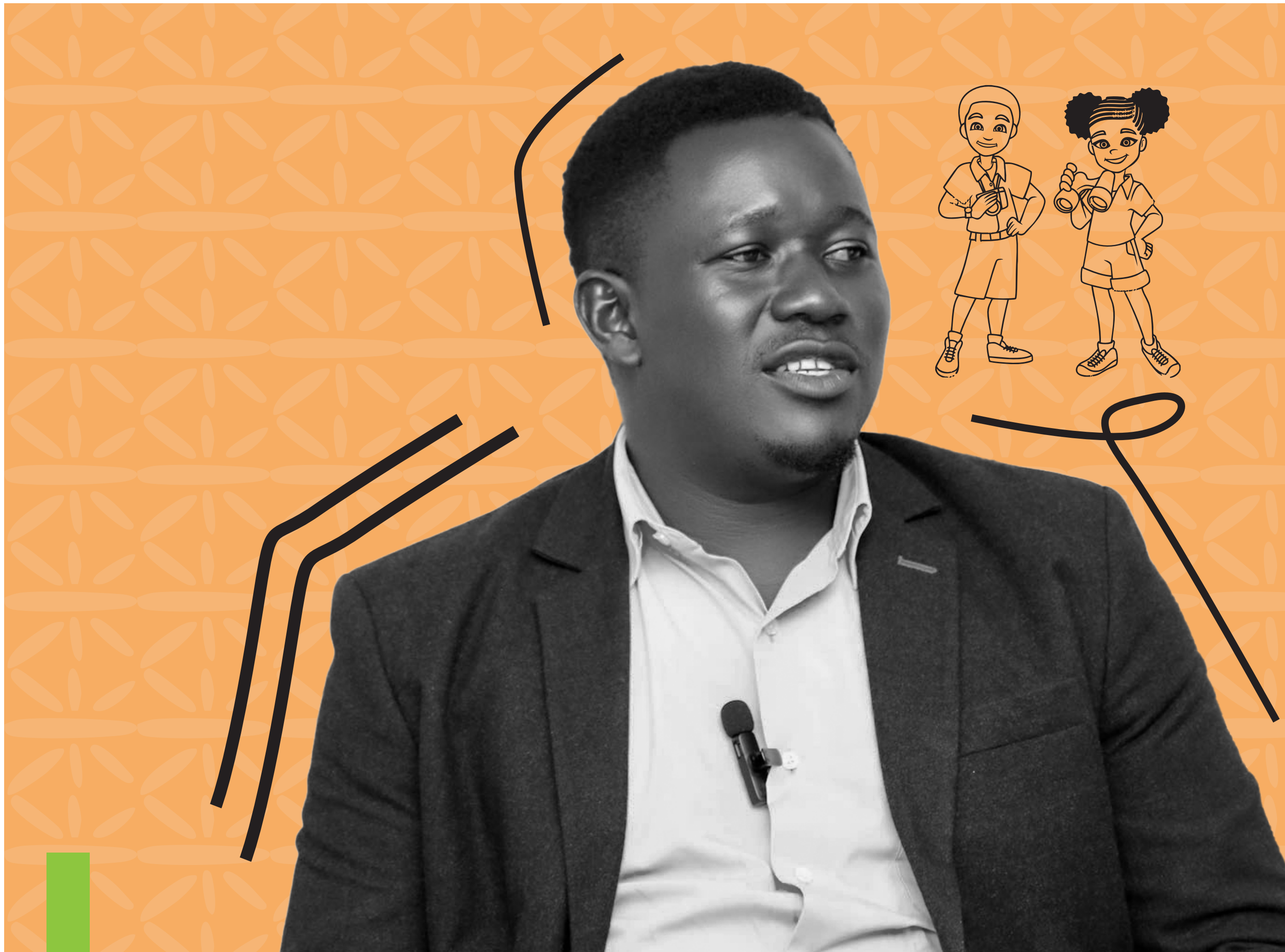
This program has not only transformed the lives of the parents I work with, but it has also re-shaped my own approach to parenting. Previously, I believed that the only way to correct my children when they did something wrong was to yell at them.

However, that has since changed; I now engage in conversations with them, explaining to them why what they did was wrong. Today, my children and I are friends. One even says, "Mommy, you are my best friend." I felt compelled to change my parenting style because I couldn't preach what I wasn't practicing.

It brings me great joy to help parents in my community foster stronger bonds with their children. Additionally, parents in my community hold me in high regard; in fact, they have even referred to me as a "counsellor," which makes me smile. Through this program, I have made many friends of different ages, which I love.

I'm committed to expanding this program to more communities in the future. Some parents who are not based in Nagojje have heard of the program and have requested that I travel there to teach it to them.





## BECOMING A PARENT

In 2019, I embarked on a journey to implement the Prevention of Violence Against Children and Young People (PVAC) program in Lira when the Foundation for Integrated Rural Development (the organization I work for) joined CRVPF's Lira PVAC cluster. Much of my work involved engaging with parents and carers, including presenting and teaching violence prevention interventions like

the "Parenting for Responsibility" manual.

This manual focuses on improving parenting and spousal relations, recognising their pivotal role in preventing violence against children and young people. However, it soon became apparent that giving advice on parenting and spousal relations without firsthand experience posed challenges, as I wasn't married or a parent.

# STORY 2

## Denis Omunyokol

My supervisors and the program participants often commented on my inexperience, asserting that practical experience was essential for effective teaching. Reflecting on their comments, I recognized the truth in their words. This realisation prompted me to reevaluate my personal life. At that time, I had a partner, and as I worked with parents and carers, implementing various program interventions, I recognised my desire to settle down, marry my partner, and start a family.

Today, I am happily married with two wonderful children. Engaging in meaningful conversations with parents, carers, and couples while directly observing the positive impacts of PVAC interventions, combined with my consistent immersion in program materials, profoundly shaped my perspective. These experiences played a pivotal role in influencing my decision to embark on the journey of marriage and beginning a family.

### CONSCIOUS CHOICES

The program also significantly influenced my parenting approach. I learned that parenting is a conscious choice. When teaching the “Bonding and Attachment” component of the “Parenting for Respectability” manual, it prompted me to reflect on my father’s parenting style, shaped by constant travel for work, which created distance between us.

This realisation emphasised the importance of spending quality time with my children, even if it’s just a few minutes, with intentionality. Today I ensure that I spend as much time as I can with my children whenever I get the chance to, especially as I am constantly away on field visits.

### FACILITATING HEALING

Another aspect of my work involves working with different kinds of families including those where couples are struggling to stay together. The beauty of PVAC is that it takes a community-focused approach, which enables

us to conduct household visits and community-level engagements.

Using PVAC manuals, we guide couples through individual conversations and reflections, fostering reunification in some cases. Through this process, I have witnessed numerous couples and their families that had difficult relations unite and even become role models for those in similar situations who are not part of the program. This has been particularly fulfilling.

A significant number of the reunited couples were initially not bound by legal marriage and this didn’t sit well with them. Following their reconciliation, they have the opportunity to participate in the parenting groups’ Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA), which is facilitated by the program.

Through this initiative, they collectively saved enough to eventually commemorate their commitment with a formal wedding. It has been my privilege to attend 15 such weddings, witnessing couples who were once estranged coming together following their transformative journey through the PVAC program.

Reuniting families and seeing the positive impact of PVAC interventions outside of the parenting groups brings me immense pride. Couples outside the program are learning from those within, creating a ripple effect of awareness and change. I am optimistic that this positive trend will continue, fostering stronger communities and healthier family dynamics.





## OVERWHELMING PAIN

“My husband died a few years ago, leaving me to look after our six children and my aging mother. I was overwhelmed in every aspect of my life; financially, I was struggling as the only one bringing in any money from my maize business, and emotionally, I was grieving. Because of how I was feeling, I used my children as punching bags.

I would hit them with a large stick that I kept in the corner of my room. I would hurt them even if they had done nothing wrong, not realizing that they were also mourning their father.”

## POWER IN COMMUNITY

One day, Harriet, a neighbor, and community-based facilitator



# STORY 3

## Sarah Nakafu

who leads a parenting group in Nagojje, Mukono, central Uganda, came to see my family and I a few months after my husband died. She urged me to start attending a weekly parenting meeting and informed me that I would be able to learn how to care for my children better and connect with other parents in the community.

I used to feel terrible when I hit my children without reason, so learning how to bond and interact with them effectively sounded appealing. I also wanted to make more friends in the community because I felt that I needed people to lean on as I was always the one my family relied on. Considering all these reasons, I joined the parenting group.

### CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

During the parenting meetings we undertook sessions and activities which helped me to learn how to strengthen the bond between my children and I. I learnt that rather than beating them, I should speak to them when I believe they've done something wrong. When I began applying some of these teachings from the parenting sessions, my children and I began to speak more and even laugh, which made the house feel lighter.

### MONEY MATTERS

Our parenting group eventually established a Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA). As a result, I began saving ush10,000 (\$3) from my maize business every Saturday when we met. I used to think that I needed a lot of money to be able to save, but the group taught me otherwise.

When we divided our savings at the end of the year, I was able to buy exercise books for my children, food for my family, care for my sick mother, and purchase household necessities such as soap and salt. The savings even helped me expand my maize business by acquiring items to increase yield, like manure.

With a higher household income, I was able to care for my family better and relieve some of my financial stress. I found myself not hitting my children because I was not as stressed about money. Additionally, my parenting group provided me with a second family.

They often come to see me, and their emotional support is important. If I am extremely busy, they take my children to theirs and look after them till I am finished. They also assist me when I am low on groceries and other household items.

Even though the dynamics within my family are healthier and things have improved financially, we continue to live in a modest house with only two rooms for eight people.

I'm hoping that God would help me by giving me longer life so that I can extend and expand my house. I am confident that with the financial skills I have from the parenting group and the VSLA, I will be able to save enough money to do so in the future.



# STORY 4

## Sylvia Nekesa

### EXHAUSTED

Sylvia, a 23-year-old mother living in Mukono district, Uganda, faced a difficult situation when she had to leave secondary school due to financial constraints. Without completing her high school education, Sylvia faced limited job prospects yet still needed to earn a living.

“I began working in Mabira Forest, where I was planting trees. The job was physically exhausting, and my bosses weren’t kind. However, I continued working because I wasn’t in school, and I needed the money.” Enduring harsh conditions, Sylvia persevered in her determination to provide for herself and her family.

### POSITIVE TURNS

One day, Sylvia’s life took a positive turn when she crossed paths with a program implementer from the Prevention of Violence Against Children and Young People (PVAC) program, supported by Children’s Rights and Violence Prevention Fund (CRVPF) and implemented in Mukono by the Najogge-Mukono Cluster.

Sylvia joined an out-of-school youth club, a key PVAC violence-prevention strategy designed to equip young people who are not in school with essential life and income-generating skills. The core of this intervention is to empower youth with the knowledge and skills required to make informed decisions and lead safe, dignified, and sustainable lives, free from violence.

### THE POWER OF HER OWN MONEY

“During the sessions I learned important lessons like the importance of a woman working to support herself and meet her needs. I also learned the value of saving money when you’re earning. You don’t need to spend a lot; it’s important to spend it wisely.”

In addition to acquiring life skills, Sylvia also had the chance to learn hairdressing, a craft she had always been passionate about but never had the chance to explore. The hairdressing classes were supplemented with customer-

care lessons teaching her how to communicate and interact with customers effectively.

“I started offering hairdressing services to people in my community by going to do their hair in their homes. Through this, I began earning more than what I was being paid in my tree-planting job, and eventually, I decided to quit.”

Sylvia not only started earning more from her mobile hairdressing job compared to the tree-planting one, but her newly acquired skill also allowed her to save enough money. With these savings, Sylvia was able to establish her own salon, which she now manages.

Despite facing a few challenges in managing her business such as frequent electricity cuts, Sylvia is now capable of providing for herself and her son through her hairdressing skill. She reflects, “First, I am proud of how far I have come because I was not where I used to be. Before, others used to exploit me, but now I can utilize the skills I have to work for myself and generate income. I dream of opening another branch and hiring people, to pass down the skills I learnt from the program.”





# STORY 5

Samuel Kajubi

## THE PARENTS GROUP

“My wife had been pressuring me to join her in the weekly parenting groups she attended, so one day I decided to go along with her. The sessions were attended by parents and carers and guided by other parents known as community-based facilitators (CBFs).

During the meetings, we delved into various aspects of parenting, including how to handle children and support our partners effectively. Each participant was encouraged to actively engage in these activities.

## FLAWED TO FULFILLED

Reflecting on the initial sessions, I realised that some of my parenting and spousal interactions were deeply flawed. I used physical violence and had sticks assigned to my wife and kids. Verbal abuse was also a part of my behaviour, especially when I felt provoked, which led to a tense and unhappy household. However, as I worked through the parenting modules, I experienced a huge transformation.

The most important thing I learned was the value of developing friendships and bonds with my children. Now, I spend precious time playing football with my children after school, which has brought joy to our family and deepened our bond. Furthermore, the act of destroying the sticks I used to hit my family within front of them signified a symbolic step towards stronger family bonds.

## PRACTICAL STEPS

We’ve adjusted our family mealtime practices, opting to eat together rather than having the kids eat separately from us. This small improvement has greatly increased the children’s happiness. Additionally, my perspective on domestic chores has changed, and I now recognise the value of sharing responsibilities with my partner.

Before the parenting sessions, I did not help my wife with any domestic chores because I thought they were not “manly.” However, I now participate in tasks like washing

clothes and tending to our animals. My wife and I also opened a joint bank account, which we manage together and discuss all our families’ expenses, something I used to do by myself. I hope that programs like this will expand so that more parents can improve.







# STORY 6

Mayimunah Namubiru

## A BRILLIANT CLUB

“My name is Mayimunah, and I am 13 years old. I am in primary 6, and I am the secretary of Brilliant Club. My role as secretary is to take notes on everything we discuss and all the activities we do during our weekly meetings. Bullying was rampant at school prior to the formation of the club.

Students bullied each other in different ways, but the most common kind of bullying was name-calling. Not only did students engage in name-calling, but teachers also used harsh language to address pupils. There was also a significant amount of corporal punishment involved. When you did something wrong, or even when you didn't, teachers would hit you in front of your classmates, which was extremely embarrassing.

When Brilliant Club started as part of the good schools' program, we held weekly sessions where we learned about the various types of violence that occurred at school and even outside of school, such as when we walked home from school. I learned ways to avoid violence outside of school, including walking home with friends rather than alone.

We learned the importance of refraining from acts of violence, such as name-calling, and the negative effects it can have on individuals, such as causing them distress and diminishing their self-esteem.

Each session began with a question about what we had done differently the week after learning about a particular topic. For example, during the week we learned about bullying and were told a story about a student who was teased by his classmates, I realized that I occasionally made jokes about my friends that I thought were funny but were actually unkind. The following week, and even today, I try to say only kind things.

## IN ACTION

Through Brilliant Club, violence in our school has significantly reduced; there is now a lot less name-calling and bullying between students. Students speak up and tell someone to stop being unpleasant to another student, instead of ignoring it like before.

When I see someone being mocked, I go over to them to see if they're okay. Students feel comfortable talking to me because we are of the same age. When a student expresses concern, such as being teased, I seek support from a focal teacher to address the issue.

There is also less corporal punishment by the teachers. Instead of shouting or beating us like they did before, teachers speak to us kindly when we make a mistake. Also, if we arrive late for school, a teacher asks about the reason for our lateness and inquires if we are okay rather than immediately punishing us.

