



Pupil Mentorship Camp III report, September 2016

Background

This report is a summary of the third pupil mentorship camp conducted in Akore primary school, Amuria district, eastern Uganda by Securing Futures Foundation (SFF). Securing Futures Foundation's approach is practical in increasing interest of children in school. Children are taken through experiential learning, exposure to real life examples and rarely-used approaches such as quantifying the real value of additional years in school. The third camp that reached 113 children in upper primary (49 boys and 64 girls) and 8 teachers was conducted on 31st August and 1st September. Every camp conducted by SFF is unique. Under the overarching theme of 'education, my future, my hope; the third camp's focus was on alternative career paths (specifically vocational), skills for living and life choices. The focus was informed by gaps identified through reviews of earlier camps.

Below are some of the highlights

Proceedings/highlights

Recap- what they remember from previous camps

The first session involved testing the key messages that had stuck with the pupils from the first two camps. It was also an opportunity to check which areas needed more emphasis. The main responses of what they recall rotated around:

- Delaying early marriage
- Perseverance, sticking in at school despite challenges faced. Education remains the best choice
- Improvement in academic performance is a choice. Due to this, some of the pupils testified seeing an increase in the number of P7 pupils putting in more study hours than before.

Technical career planning



The deputy Principal Ogolai technical institute elaborating about technical education and different career paths

SFF partnered with Ogolai technical training institute (government owned) to lead the session on technical career planning. During the first and second camps, SFF noted that the pupils lacked guidance on feasible options beyond primary especially as many had indicated ending in primary as their education goal. Working with an authentic partner to diffuse any

information gaps was seen to be a good option. Apart from discussing the different technical related careers, the facilitator (the deputy principal at the College) emphasized the favorable government policy on technical education. The key message was 'technical education is highly subsidized by government; therefore there shouldn't be an excuse for not going beyond primary'. This was news to both the pupils and teachers present. Teachers pledged to organize another session with the Facilitator targeting only the parents to receive the career guidance. The Deputy Principal however stressed the importance of making deliberate choices when filling the primary leaving forms before the exams which eases entry into technical schools.

Real life stories of persistence as a training aid

One of the tested approaches used by SFF is real life stories. These come from different angles, profiling popular public figures, giving public figures speaking time or using SFF signed up volunteers to share their life stories directly with the pupils. The stories have to be a) preferably from people who are from the same or similar backgrounds as the target group and b) genuine examples of persistence in education. In this camp, two of the SFF volunteers present on the ground shared their stories that sent powerful messages to the children on life choices and perseverance



Merab, one of the SFF volunteers sharing her life story of persistence. Timothy, one of the SFF Founder member sharing his story on life choices

Stories of change by the pupils

SFF has been working with pupils in Akore primary school for the last 9 months and during which time 3 camps have been held. An attempt was made to analyze changes to date and there was something to report on.

- **Change in focus!** For the first time in decades¹, about 8 pupils in the P.7 class are aspiring to get first grades in their primary leaving exams. While this is yet to happen (when they sit for the exams in November), SFF notes this as an impact as the pupils are not only paying lip service to this but actually working hard towards it. For example, pupils are studying more, coming back to school after class and during weekends to revise. They attribute this to the consistent messaging by SFF of persistence, choice and determination.

¹ Akore primary school is over 40 years old. It has never registered a first grade in its primary leaving exams all these years. SFF deliberately works with rural, often remote schools

- **Change in choices!** Some pupils openly shared stories of the change they see on a personal level that they attributed to participating in the camps organized by SFF. Pupils shared stories of dropping less progressive habits such as sexual relationships and concentrating on their studies. Two examples are shared here.

Boniface is 14 years old and in P.7 in Akore primary school. SFF first met him in 2015 while he was in P.6. In this Sept camp he excitedly shared his story that he attributes to the work of SFF. By Dec 2015, Boniface did not care much about the future. Having grown up with his grandmother, there was nothing much to look forward to. He, like many of his peers was sexually active, with two girlfriends. His school grades were poor. From the first contact with SFF, especially the boy talk (life skills) session, he left unconvinced, he thought the challenges of life were too many to dream of a good future. However the more he reasoned with himself, the more he decided to make a choice. He decided to work towards being an engineer. He dropped the girl friends he had. Getting off early sex gave him more time to concentrate on his studies. "When I chose to become an engineer, I realized my mathematics grades were terrible. I decided to give it more attention, putting in more study time, including evening preps (revision)' says Boniface. His efforts paid off as his math grades moved from less than 30% in tests in P.6 to over 70% in P.7. Not only him is off girls and sex and concentrating on a better future, even his four friends pictured above. Now he is among those aiming for a first grade in a school that hasn't seen such in over 20 years.



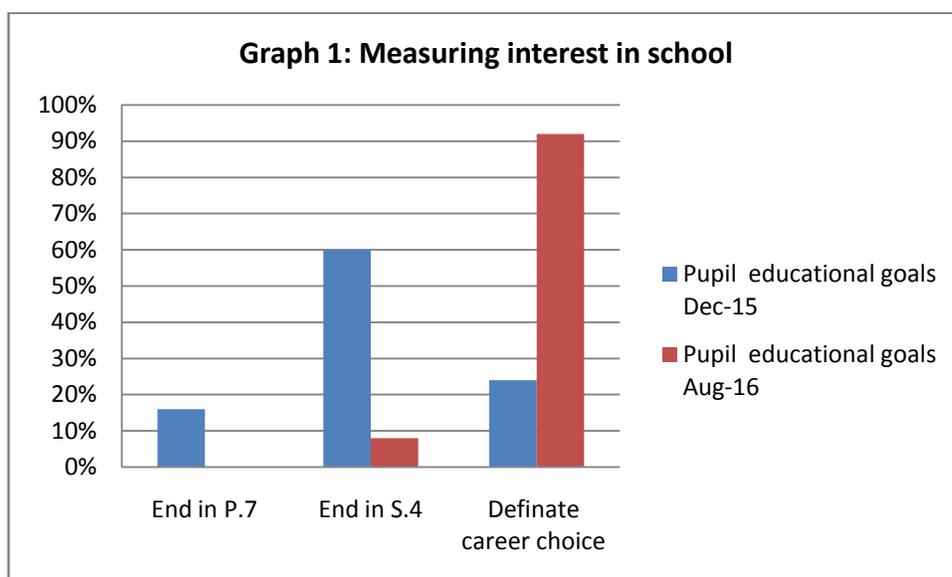
Boniface- in a Tshirt with his friends



Mary Gorreti at school

My name is Ajano Mary Gorreti, I am 16 and in P6. I see the difference made by the team from SFF. Pupils are concentrating more in their studies. There have been less drop- outs from school. Last year in our P.5 class, 5 girls dropped out. Since the first mentorship camp that we participated in, in December 2015, only one girl left school since (by end of Aug, 2016). I would like to be a teacher one day. The greatest challenge I see among girls is the ability to say no to sexual advances. The temptations are many and once girls give in, they easily leave school. In the mentorship camps we attend, successful people from villages like ours share stories of how they overcame similar challenges we are going through. This encourages a lot.

- **Change in ambition!** The overall aim of the pupil mentorship camps organized by SFF is to increase the interest of the target children in school. SFF analyzed sets of commitment cards² filled by the children in Camp I of December 2015 and compared with those filled in September 2016. The findings show change in ambition of the children. In December 2015, 16% of the pupils stating ending in P7 as their target compared to 0% in the September 2016 camp, similarly 60% in December thought they would end in S4 compared to only 8% in September. Finally 24% of the children in December named a definite career as their goal, compared to 92% in the September camp as shown in the graph 1 below. There is a strong link between these changes and the messages passed over by SFF.



Challenges to confront

So far, and in particular during this camp the challenges worth noting include the following:

The need to get teachers more interested. In the second camp, SFF held a one day session with teachers and parents to reinforce the messages for the pupils. However, teachers continue to show less concern. For example the girls reported that they had not sat down to share with the senior woman teacher for all the two terms of 2016. Similarly in the two day camp, not many teachers were keen on the sessions. SFF deliberately targets the last week of term for the camp because normally, no teaching is going on as pupils will have sat their exams and are waiting for the reports and closure of the term. SFF held a meeting with the teachers to share this concern and tap on their ability to partner with SFF on the camps and role modeling for the children. We wait to see how this fairs in the coming camps.

The numeracy and literacy challenge is real; children in upper primary struggle to read and write. SFF is considering working with the school administration to introduce reading clubs

Is this poverty or lack of prioritization of education? The SFF team heard that 17 children missed the second term exams (conducted in August) in P.4 because they could not contribute the 2,000/- exam processing fees.

² In these cards, pupils write down two educational related goals they plan to work towards over a 10 year period.

Our Next plans

- Authenticating the impact of the approaches of SFF. We are convinced we are making change, not just because of the testimonies but also because of the unique but cheap solutions we have so far crafted in answering the issue of increasing interest in school thereby reducing school dropout. We plan to take this further and subject it to a Randomized Control Trial of sorts. Uganda could soon get the answer it has been waiting for in increasing retention and transition rates in its education system.
- In the next camp, planned for December, organize a tour of the technical institute for the pupils for exposure and inspiration. Similarly work with the engineering students, especial girls to share their stories

About Securing Futures Foundation

We are a volunteer based movement with the sole purpose of increasing the interest of the rural youth, especially girls in staying in school longer. We use the experiences and stories of educated young women and men typically from the same contexts to exemplify how possible and important staying in school is. Once people get educated, they leave the countryside, removing a much needed inspiration to the younger generation. At Securing Futures Foundation, we mobilize such to go back and share their time, stories, skills and experiences. We not only build interest in school, we also build leadership and life skills especially for girls knowing that 31% of them drop out of school due to **marriage** and 21% due to **pregnancy** according to the findings from the Uganda National Household Survey 2011/2012.

We have so far mobilized over 50 volunteers (generating over Ugx 5,600,000 in cash alone) in Uganda to partner with us, reaching over 400 pupils in 3 mentorship camps. We first registered with Amuria district local government in 2014 and are in the process of being incorporated under the Uganda Registration and Services Bureau

Thank you!

To the generous supporters of the cause. This particular camp received support; financial and in kind from 10 persons and Nile breweries for water. 4 'foot soldiers' participated physically in the camp, namely: Timothy Onyait, Abraham Achoa, Merab Isenyi, Sarah Amulo. A total of ugx 785,000 in cash was mobilized from volunteers, a donation of a cow and 20 cartons of mineral water. By the end of the camp, there was a balance of ugx 29,500 in the account.

Direct supporters of this camp included the following

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|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Stephen Oupal | 7. Dinah Onyait | 13. Jennifer Achaloi |
| 2. Irene Among | 8. Sarah Amulo | 14. Mr & Mrs. Edau |
| 3. Michael Ndarama | 9. Abraham Achoa | 15. Mariam Nanfuka |
| 4. Nile Breweries | 10. Merab Isenyi | |
| 5. John Eyanu | 11. Beatrice Badaru | |
| 6. Timothy Onyait | 12. Flavia Achom | |

Annexes

Mentorship camp III program: 31st Aug & 1st Sept 2016

Day	Session	Led by
Wednesday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap of last two camps with a focus on the value of education and getting ideas not to miss in the next two days <i>Volunteers to pick up some stories of change from teachers and parents concurrently</i> Career guidance with a focus on vocational skills <i>Revisit the list of careers compiled</i> 	Timothy <i>Sarah to pick up some impact stories</i> Deputy principal Ogolai Voc college
From early Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two groups for girls discussing Abstinence Character/Personality development or Life skills session discussion with Boys focusing on.... 	Sarah, Katie and Merab Timothy and Abraham
Thursday Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habits, Practices and Planning for Excellence in Academics and life <i>A volunteer with a story to illustrate this would be great</i> The value of education (session I) <i>Discussion on the importance of reading</i> 	Timothy Sarah Amulo
Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bottom line session – <i>where and how do we all fit in God's masterwork, what is His view of you?</i> Making commitments and accountability partners Fun time: music, dance etc Closure 	Katie & Abraham Timothy Simon Jackson

