

**U g a n d a  
C h i l d r e n ' s  
C e n t r e**

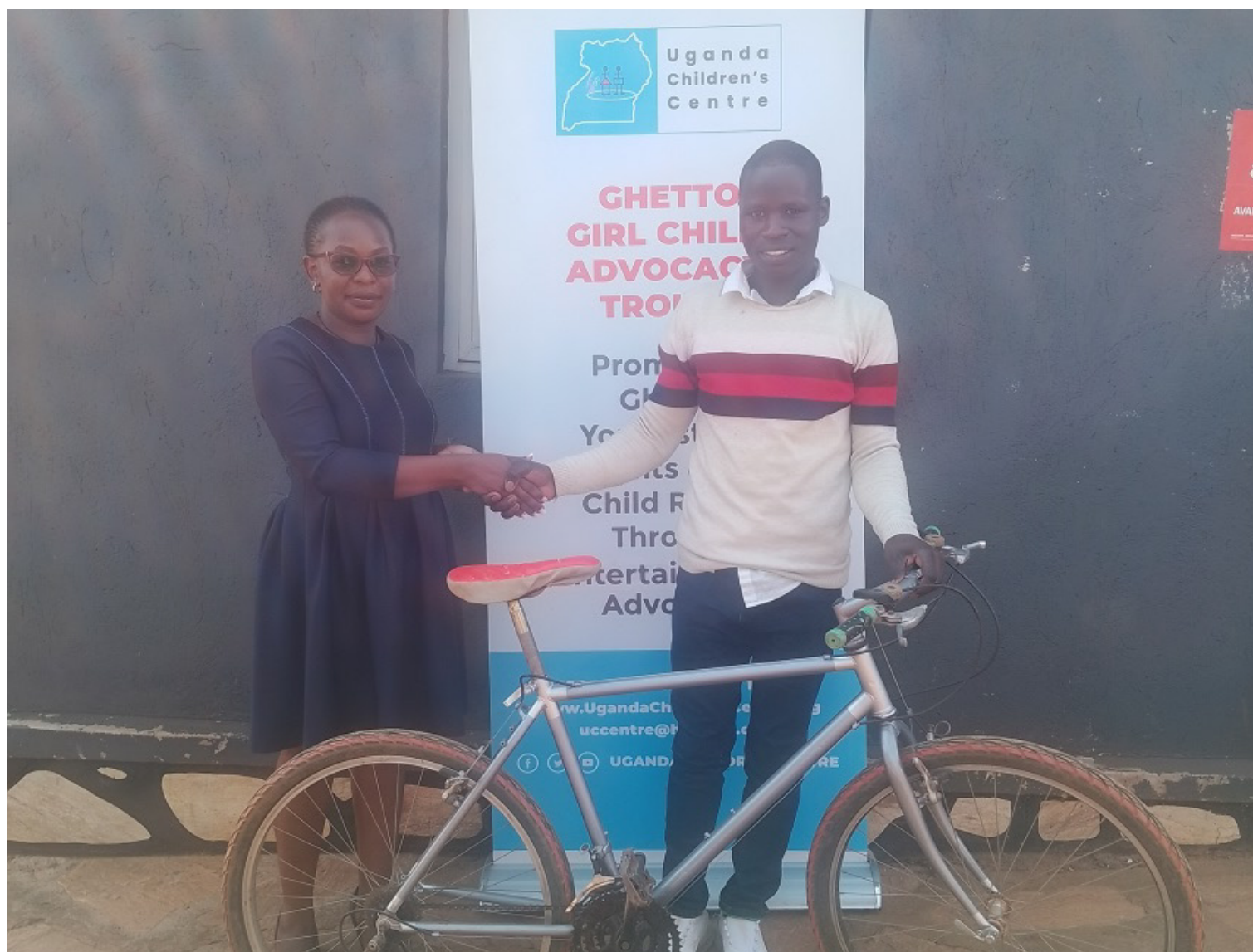
CARING FOR CHILDREN AND  
THE YOUNG IS A NECESSITY

JANUARY – AUGUST  
**NEWSLETTER**

**2024 ISSUE**

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### **UCC DONATES A BICYCLE TO A BENEFICIARY FOR HIS LONG COMMUTE TO SCHOOL**

UCC donated a bicycle to Kennedy Ssebbanjja a student in senior five who relocated to the rural area after failure of his mother to sustain the family due to increased costs of living in Kampala slums. Kennedy is a bright young boy highly dedicated to his studies who has a big dream of becoming a doctor. Kennedy's mother worked in an informal market which faced demolition after city law enforcers effected city laws not allowing people to work in non gazetted areas. Since she

did not have money to open a big business, she relocated to the village with all her children. This transition had a lot of suffering and hopelessness which caused the mother to suffer from some mental distortions. We thank Kennedy and family members who gave her support until she stabilized.

We thank MEM members for providing financial resources that enabled Kennedy acquire a bicycle. We strongly believe that Kennedy will put to good use this bicycle to enhance his performance at school, and other responsibilities that need effective time management. Kennedy was very thankful to MEM and UCC for supporting him in his educational journey. UCC adds its voice on this achievement.



## **UCC ENROLLS 2ND COHORT OF KAMPALA URBAN YOUTHS TO BENEFIT FROM VOCATIONAL SKILLS TRAINING**

The Norwegian Refugee Council extended its contract with Uganda children's centre to train the 2nd cohort of Kampala urban youths in trade skills of their choice at the vocational skilling centre. The 52 youths comprised of both national and refugees, with majority of the learners coming from neighbouring countries now facing civil conflicts namely; DRC, Somalia, Eritrea, South Sudan, Sudan and Burundi. The training takes a period of six months inclusive of industrial training. The training resumed in November 2023, and ended in May 2024 after industrial training. NRC is typically responsible for the financial support towards training, materials and start up kits after completion.

UCC's role was to assess trainees during recruitment, provision of career guidance and psycho social support, trade skills training, feeding, organizing recreational activities, coordination of Directorate of training assessment exams, identification of enterprises for industrial training, supervision and employment linkage.

Some of the trainees were teenage mothers who trained along with their young children. The training was effectively done by UCC instructors who inspired learners to be motivated every other day. We thank Africhild Centre, a multi-disciplinary child-focused research institution which conducted research among trainees and UCC staff to collect data to enable it build evidence and knowledge for the protection and well-being of learners. With this innovation, we foresee a more improved training of learners in future. UCC is organizing a graduation for both cohorts slated to take place on 10th October 2024 at UCC grounds. UCC management appealed to prospective employers to give job opportunities to these trainees to employ their abilities, skills and talents after such an intensive training.

We thank MEM for the financial support, local leaders and entire ghetto communities for appreciating the project. Special thanks go to UCC team, trainers, and the ghetto girls for accepting to join the project. We shall keep updating about the progress.



## **UCC JOIN UNIVERSITY INTERNS TO PAY A VISIT TO A CONGOLESE REFUGEE CENTRE IN MAKINDYE**

On July 5 2024, a team of social work students from Uganda Children`s Center led by the supervisor Mr. Kakembo Fred, embarked on a visit to a refugee camp in Makindye. The camp is a home to refugees mostly Congolese, Somalis, Ethiopians, Kenyans, Tanzanians and other Nationalities. The visit aimed to expose students to realities of Refugee life, understand their challenges and identify potential areas for social work intervention.

The Refugee camp is a hub of diverse cultures and experiences. Despite the harsh conditions, the refugees formed a community association under the leadership of Mr. Douglas Bulongo as the president for all registered members of the association. He plays a vital role in advocating for their rights, providing support and empowering them to build their lives.

The visit further aimed to understand the living conditions and challenges faced by refugees in urban camps. During the visit, the team was briefed about the conditions characterizing the livelihoods of urban refugees in Uganda, and strategies in place to help them cope with the various situations. Mr. Bulongo thanked the government of Uganda, and international organizations particularly, United Nations High Commission for Refugees for the support and services rendered to refugee communities in Uganda. He was extremely happy with UCC for sparing time to visit its headquarters in Kampala. He committed on behalf of the association, to cooperate with UCC in ensuring that refugees` rights are prioritized and given the honour they deserved.

He further promised to collaborate with UCC vocational skilling centre to up skill urban refugees with marketable trade skills to get absorbed in the employment sector. He stressed that his major responsibility was to mobilize refugee communities to access essential services such as

healthcare and education among others. UCC team responded by reassuring Mr. Bulongo of its readiness to cooperate and give support where necessary to reinforce refugees' justice.



## **UCC HOLDS MEETING WITH PARENTS AND GUARDIANS OF FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME AT THE OFFICE**

Every year UCC organizes special meetings for parents and guardians of beneficiaries of formal education programme to examine some of the emerging issues concerning the programme. This year, under the guidance of UCC management, members held a meeting to identify key achievements and some challenges contributing to delayed attainment of the programme's goals and objectives. Despite the busy schedules of the members, those present made fruitful deliberations whose outcomes remained fundamental to the success of the programme.

Members began by appreciating UCC and MEM for the work done in providing financial resources to their children to access formal education. They recalled those moments when their children had joined bad groups and committing petty crimes in the community. Ever since they joined the school programme, they were now reformed children serving as role models. Even their performances at school improved drastically. Also, members appreciated UCC's role of visiting their children at school to check on their progress in terms of performance, and they coped with the school environment.

However, they were concerned about school fees increments which keep shooting higher every new term yet the government restricted schools from doing it. They predicted a high drop out of learners resulting from this excessive school charges. They requested UCC management to engage school owners and administrators to be considerate to families staying in informal settlements due to their low incomes. This was well discussed the meeting resolved to write a letter signed by all present members and present it to the President representative commonly known as the Resident City Commissioner.

In the same vein, UCC cautioned members to desist from relocating children in distanced schools without notifying management. They were also reminded to deliver end of term report cards in time to avoid delaying administrative work. The project coordinator further told parents

that there is an organisational nurse who is ready to attend to children health needs. This will reduce frequent sicknesses that cause children's absence from school due to malaria and other health ailments.

The meeting ended with the request to UCC management to continue promoting such meetings and also inviting officials from the Ministry of education and sports to answer some of their queries and concerns. This was noted by UCC and promised to endeavor doing it next time.



## **UCC SUPPORTS A FEMALE PARENT UNDER FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME WITH STARTUP CAPITAL**

Uganda Children's Centre is privileged to work with local communities residing and working in informal settlements on the outskirts of Kampala city. Most families suffered a lot from COVID-19 and most businesses closed due to reduced incomes caused by prolonged lockdowns. This population constitutes majority of the parents and guardians served by UCC. Some of them are elderly, while others are sickly with varied health challenges like diabetes, cancer, heart disease, depression, HIV/AIDS and many other ailments that need immediate medical attention. Those who completely failed to get medical attention during Covid-19 succumbed to death. Others had their health conditions worsened to severity due to their inaccessibility to medical care.

One of the parents under the programme completely failed to resume with active work due to sickness and lack of capital. We thank MEM for financing her to undergo medical examinations at Mulago National Referral Hospital in Kampala. It was revealed that she was not in serious danger and could go ahead with her medication and doing normal light work. However, her condition continued to deteriorate that she could not do any work to sustain the family. To make the matters worse, one of her children benefitting from the programme has a heart disease though still manageable. She has two children on the programme, a girl in primary, and a boy in secondary.

When her health improved, she requested UCC to support her with some funds to capitalize her small business of selling raw food to people in the neighborhoods. UCC social worker was dispatched to help her write a simple budget of what she wanted to do. After receiving the budget and finding it credible, UCC management resolved to fund it. After receiving the funds and buying some of the items to start business, the landlord chased her out of his house. UCC pleaded with the landlord to let her start her new business. He refused and said he does not want her on his houses. We extended the issues to the local leaders but all was in vain. They said they have no authority over one's property.

After realizing it was not possible for this parent to remain in this house, UCC identified a new house for her and started supporting her from there. She has not yet resumed working and her survival depends on UCC, neighbors, local church and other sympathizers. Luckily, all her children are going to school. Thanks to MEM and UCC for enabling this service to prevail. UCC keeps checking on her to ensure her life is progressing on well.



## **UNIVERSITY INTERNS JOIN UCC STAFF TO VISIT FAMILIES BENEFITTING FROM UCC COMMUNITY PROJECTS**

UCC is a community based organization involved in numerous community development activities that have elevated it to gain an upper hand in influencing some of the by-laws instituted by the local authorities. It has access to opportunities such as interacting with prominent personalities in the community, for example; local leaders, religious leaders, elders and other opinion leaders that continue to provide it with substantive support, guidance and wisdom during project implementation leading it to fulfill key organizational goals and objectives.

The organization conducts frequent community outreaches under which it interacts with some of the families of supported children, mostly beneficiaries of the Formal education programme. Such visits include attending community meetings organized by local leaders when they have special communications they want to make towards community members. Others include special arrangements organized by local leaders to meet families that applied for assistance from the organization.

Also, UCC requests for special meetings with families of beneficiaries to establish how they are coping with life and to learn if there are some issues that may require professional involvement. Some families may have difficulties to live in harmony as a family due to misunderstandings or having oppressive family members or tendencies of domestic violence. With such situations, the organization social worker intervenes to help the family reach some understanding. Or else, draws a programme where counselling starts with members who are cooperative.

Furthermore, such visits extended to people staying in slums are always important to discuss with the caregivers about how their child or children is or are performing at school, and whether, there are challenges affecting the progress of the studies. It is well known that children in these situations face numerous challenges that hinder them from completing their full cycle of education. Of the numerous families visited, it remains an organizational policy to have a ratio of 1:3 visitations. This implies that every three families visited, two should belong to the girl child while one to the boy child.

This recommendation resulted from records depicting numerous stories and documented evidences portraying the high risk and vulnerability of the girl child in these urban poor communities which grossly her educational dreams leading to drop outs and other social injustices. Such factors include among others; family marrying off the girl child to get dowry; early pregnancies and early marriages; eloping with sugar daddies; transactional sex among others. If an opportunity arises to visit families in the slums, such gesture provides development workers

with good learning experiences and lessons that originate from new information that keep following in due to high influx of people joining the slums on the daily basis. It is always an adventure for UCC to continue interacting with such members of community.



## **UCC CONDUCTS SCHOOL VISITS TO DEEPEN ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH LEARNERS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS**

It is always an exciting moment for beneficiaries to see UCC staff visiting them at school. To ensure children demonstrate good academic performance and related achievements, UCC management adopted it as a policy to have frequent visits to schools to motivate learners, share some of their challenges, identify their needs, listen to their teachers regarding the child's abilities, reach workable solutions together, as well as looking at some of the documents defining the child's abilities such as mid term reports, pictorials, handcraft products, and many others. These visits normally target official days of the schools such as visitation days, class days, exhibition days, sports and games competition days; music, dance and drama competition days, or any other day sanctioned by the school for parents to visit.

Since UCC started visiting beneficiaries at their schools, it enhanced their abilities to perform better especially those who used to perform poorly. It is well noted that some parents or guardians after registering their children with UCC and ensuring that their children have been enrolled in a specific schools, they stopped making any serious follow up. This type of neglect or abandonment by parents has had serious effects on the learning trends of some children psychologically and physiologically. Since children are in their developing stages, they always need some sort of attachment to support their growth and social learning experiences.

During the visits, UCC staff interacts with school administrators to discuss some of the issues affecting parents-teachers-learners relationships, and why parents find it hard to complete school fees in time. This is always an opportunity for caregivers to discuss with administrators since some schools take long without holding parents meetings. Others, a year ends without hearing of any meeting. It is always hard to have a common ground for all parents in some schools especially if issues concern school fees discounts and bursaries which drives away some administrators from the scene. In such situations, UCC uses peculiar tactics and engages such stubborn administrators separately. Sometimes it works to allow UCC beneficiaries be scrapped from the list with high school pays. But all the same, the bills remains without much change.

Our appreciation goes to members of MEM who always supported beneficiaries by providing them with scholastic materials donated to them during visitation days. In the same context, UCC provides them with some food and non food items particularly those in boarding schools to help them cope well with motivation. We also thank some parents and guardians who have always been there for their children through thin and thick, especially where the fathers have abandoned the families.



## **UCC PAYS VISIT TO KNRC TO CHECK ON THE PROGRESS OF ACTIVITIES LAID TO PROMOTE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS**

Uganda children's centre received funding from the European Union Delegation in Uganda to implement a project that aimed to promote Child Rights at Kampiringisa National Rehabilitation Centre (KNRC) in Mpigi District. KNRC is Uganda's only juvenile detention centre for children aged 12-18 and is housing over 200 children found in conflict with the law. UCC together with other partners namely, Children Justice Initiative and Food step Uganda implemented a project that was conceived to strengthen activities in the centre that promoted children rights. When the project was completely done by the partners, the following key outputs were registered; New purposed girls dormitory, New farming tractor, New minibus, Fresian cows, Poultry, Improved solar kitchen, Solar installation in boys dormitory, Power driven borehole, Opening of 2 acres maize plantation, horticulture farming, equipping carpentry and joinery, and welding workshops and vocational skills training for 42 juveniles at UCC Vocational skills training centre.

After closure of the project 3 years ago UCC found it necessary to pay a visit at the facility to assess the progress of the work at the facility. UCC staff was joined by university students undertaking their internship placement at the organization. On arrival at KNRC, the team was received by the Deputy Principal who engaged them in a brief meeting before taking them around. She was pleased to receive the delegation from Kampala, but also, extended the Principal's apology for not being present due to other engagements at the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development headquarters in Kampala.

She dedicated substantial time to educate the team about the history of the facility, daily operations, processes of committing juveniles to the facility, types of juveniles, nature of cases committed, period of rehabilitation, services provided by the facility, leadership, relationship with ministry and other organizations, and current numbers of incarcerated juveniles among others. Some of these explanations directly responded to some of the concerns raised by UCC and intern students.

After the discussion and brain storming, the team was taken around the facility to visit different operational departments. While some departments were still functional, other key ones were non functional and had dilapidated equipment. Of the few operational facilities, it was the power generated bore hole that operated fully and supplied high volumes of safe drinking water to the facility, staff quarters and the community health centre. Thanks go to EUD for the financial support,



and UCC for mobilising other partners to engage in impactful work on the ground. The visit was a learning experience which provided a lot of insights into the work of the brave team that provides services in the facility. The juveniles were busy with different activities going on which was a good gesture for them to be engaged.



## **UCC SUPPORTS LEARNERS OF MAKINDYE INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH CAREER GUIDANCE**

Uganda Children's Centre collaborates with other educational entities to support learners faced with difficulties in determining how their chosen careers fit-in with their desires and needs in the current employment market. In order to execute this mission, UCC worked with the sister institution, Makindye Institute for Social Development (MAKSOD) and interfaced with multiple students offering different courses in business, vocational, technical and other professions that prepare them for readiness before joining the world of work.

UCC undertakes this activity in partnership with MAKSOD instructors, student interns, volunteers and other experts outsourced to support the team. Career guidance is prioritized by UCC because of its effectiveness to help students understand and make informed decisions about their career paths and professional development. It encompasses a range of services and activities designed to assist students to explore career options, making career choices and managing their careers over time.

Career guidance sessions are held every Tuesday in the evening when students are done with their lessons. We thank MAKSOD management for the good cooperation exhibited during these activities. For special cases, such students are handled individually to allow them have in-depth exploration of their career paths and tailored action plans. However, group sessions provide a better platform for peer interaction, shared learning, and allowing of participants to benefit from each other's experiences.

Evaluation of the feedback demonstrate that students are now able to exhibit clarity and direction about their career paths, understanding skills development, making informed decisions, developed skills for goal setting, and enhanced confidence building. A substantial number of students were totally green about their career paths which contributed grossly to low morale and motivation in their learning processes. Thanks to UCC Career guidance programme which rejuvenated students to appreciate professional development as a key strategy to win good employment opportunities on the job market. Evidence shows that more numbers of students increased in attending these sessions. UCC is already drawing workplans to extend this service to other institutions in the neighbourhoods.



## **DISSEMINATION OF SURVEY RESULTS OF THE URBAN EDUCATION RESEARCH REPORT**

On 31st July 2024, a community dissemination workshop was held in UCC main hall, Makindye - Kampala as a follow up of the research study conducted by African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) based in Nairobi, Kenya in collaboration with IDAY Uganda. This was the 3rd workshop after conducting the same in Mukono and a hybrid meeting with officials of the Ministry of Education and Sports at Fairway Hotel

UCC is a founding member IDAY Uganda Chapter, and hosts the coalition, and is the current chair. In 2018, APHRC partnered with IDAY Uganda to work collaboratively on issues of the schooling patterns of urban children. IDAY Uganda mobilised its members together with state actors of education and formed the Uganda Urban Education Group (UEG). After several engagements, the UEG members sought to carry out a research study in selected urban informal settlements in Uganda. This decision was reached after failure by members to have concrete data on schooling urban children.

In the nut shell, the research aimed to understand the schooling patterns among children living in urban poor households in Uganda including those with special needs. To have explanation about the observed schooling patterns in small and large centres. To understand how poor urban communities perceive and understand education as a right in context of urbanization in Uganda. To know available education opportunities that exist for children with special needs and living in poor households in Uganda. Lastly, to know which survival and educational mechanisms/initiatives did people in urban poor settlements adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a snapshot, the report revealed that the global population will predominately be urban by the year 2050. In Uganda, the urban population currently stands at 28.6% of the total population. The urban population growth rate is approximately 5.4% per year. School enrollement indicate that out-of school children aged 4-17 years were 2.1% before COVID-19, and 9.0% after full school reopening. Before COVID-19, more male learners (2.4%) were out of school compared to (2.1%) after school reopening. More female learners (9.2%) were out of school compared to male learners (8.6%). It implies that more female children were more affected after COVID-19, and is attributed to high cases of teenage pregnancies. Further reading is recommended to grasp other findings presented by the report.

In summary, improving access to quality education for children in Uganda's poor urban informal

settlements, requires a systematic approach involving government action, community engagement, and public – private collaborations. If these mechanisms are given opportunity to thrive, educational equity can be enhanced, and better opportunities provided for all children regardless of their socio-economic background.



## **UCC COLLABORATES WITH MAKSOD TO EVALUATE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON CURRENT TEACHING**

UCC partnered with MAKSOD management to conduct an evaluation research to assess the training effectiveness on the learners' knowledge, skills and performance. UCC social work department organized this exercise to support MAKSOD to help instructors and learners to improve teaching and learning. Since MAKSOD was established, no research was conducted amongst students in this line. However, with the introduction of the new curriculum by the Ministry of Education and Sports, it was imperative to examine the impact and level of effectiveness aligning with current teaching and learning.

The research sampled learners from different courses offered by the institute. Both genders participated, and a sample size of 30 students was considered. The study used a qualitative method where it applied questionnaires and respondents wrote in their own words. Each questionnaire had 25 questions and was administered within 30 minutes.

The students were grateful for this initiative and their participation was entirely voluntary. The final year university students of social work and social administration worked hand in hand with UCC and MAKSOD management to ensure that the exercise ends well and successfully. Whoever completed the questionnaire was allowed to submit in and leave the room. Incidentally, all questionnaires were submitted without any spoilt one.

UCC social work department will be sharing the final research report after analysing the collected data. The report will presumably share the findings of the study and subsequently suggest some recommendations to the Administration on how effective service delivery will be achieved. We are grateful that this exercise was successfully done despite the period when students are busy preparing for their final National examinations. We further call on MAKSOD to provide space if approached again.



Rebecca  
Nakiryowa, student  
of Hairdressing and  
beauty displaying  
some of her training  
materials provided  
to her by UCC

University Intern  
students organizing  
files for beneficiaries  
of Formal education  
programme at UCC  
office

