



VOLUNTEER REPORT

2026

BY

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May all those who contributed towards the success of this placement be blessed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the experiences, activities undertaken, achievements realised, skills acquired, lessons learned, challenges encountered, and recommendations arising from a three-month volunteer placement at Ibanda Girls Child Care Initiative (IGCCI) under the Graduate Career Accelerator Programme (GCAP) implemented by Restless Development Uganda.

The volunteer placement provided an opportunity to contribute to community development initiatives while gaining practical experience in programme implementation, stakeholder engagement, community mobilisation, and organisational development. The placement was conducted within various communities, schools, health facilities, SACCOs, and community groups where IGCCI implements interventions aimed at improving the well-being of vulnerable populations.

During the placement period, participation was undertaken in a range of activities including community nutrition and food security outreaches, health promotion campaigns, school-based interventions on nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), child protection and learner wellbeing, engagements with SACCOs and livelihood groups, entrepreneurship mentorship for youth, monitoring and evaluation activities, stakeholder meetings, and community sensitization programmes on gender-based violence prevention and climate resilience.

Notable achievements realised during the placement included the successful delivery of entrepreneurship mentorship sessions for youth enrolled in vocational skills programmes, community sensitisation on nutrition, health, food security, and gender-based violence prevention, monitoring of the Girl First mentorship programme in schools, and promotion of smart irrigation technologies through community awareness sessions. The placement also supported the identification of community needs and challenges through direct engagement with households, schools, health facilities, SACCOs, and other community stakeholders.

The placement further contributed to strengthening the visibility of IGCCI through support towards social media engagement, website content visibility, and LinkedIn networking activities. These efforts enhanced awareness of organisational programmes and improved stakeholder engagement. In addition, approximately 90 per cent of the planned activities for the reporting period were successfully implemented through collaboration among staff, volunteers, community leaders, and beneficiaries.

The volunteer placement contributed significantly to professional growth through the acquisition of practical skills in community mobilisation, facilitation, communication, mentorship, stakeholder engagement, monitoring and evaluation, report writing, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and digital communication. Valuable lessons were also learned regarding the importance of community participation, partnership building, integrated programming, and evidence-based decision-making in community development practice.

While the placement was largely successful, several areas requiring further strengthening were identified, including resource mobilisation, transport and logistical support, capacity building for members and volunteers, communication and coordination mechanisms, documentation systems, member engagement, and community outreach. Addressing these areas presents opportunities for enhancing organisational effectiveness, sustainability, and programme impact.

The report recommends strengthening resource mobilisation efforts, expanding capacity-building initiatives, improving transport and logistical support, enhancing internal communication systems, strengthening documentation and knowledge management practices, increasing community and digital engagement, and promoting strategic partnerships to support sustainable programme implementation.

Overall, the volunteer placement was a valuable and rewarding experience that contributed to both personal and professional development while supporting the mission of Ibanda Girls Child Care Initiative. The experience reinforced the importance of community-driven approaches, collaboration, and sustainable interventions in improving livelihoods, promoting wellbeing, and strengthening community resilience.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Graduate Career Accelerator Programme (GCAP)

Youth unemployment and underemployment remain major challenges for many graduates in Uganda and across Africa. Although higher education institutions equip students with theoretical knowledge and technical competencies, many graduates struggle to transition into the labour market because of limited practical experience and insufficient exposure to workplace environments. Consequently, initiatives that bridge the gap between education and employment have become increasingly important in preparing young people for successful careers.

The Graduate Career Accelerator Programme (GCAP) was established to address this challenge by providing recent graduates with opportunities to gain practical work experience, strengthen professional competencies, and improve their employability. The programme is implemented by Restless Development Uganda in partnership with the African Leadership Academy (ALA) and aims to equip young graduates with workplace skills, leadership competencies, mentorship opportunities, and exposure to professional work environments.

Through partnerships with host organisations across different sectors, GCAP places graduates in institutions where they contribute to organisational activities while gaining practical experience. The programme promotes experiential learning, professional development, networking, and career growth among young professionals.

1.2 Background of Restless Development Uganda

Restless Development Uganda is a youth-led development organisation that works to empower young people to become leaders and agents of positive change within their communities. The organisation supports youth participation in development through programmes focusing on livelihoods, governance, education, health, climate action, and leadership development.

As part of its commitment to youth empowerment and employment creation, Restless Development Uganda implements programmes that enhance employability, leadership, and career readiness among young people. Through the Graduate Career Accelerator Programme, the organisation provides graduates with opportunities to acquire practical workplace experience while contributing to community and organisational development.

Among its priority areas are education and livelihood development, where the organisation supports young people in acquiring employability skills, workplace readiness, and career development opportunities through internships, volunteer placements, and leadership programmes.

1.3 Background of Ibanda Girls Child Care Initiative (IGCCI)

Ibanda Girls Child Care Initiative (IGCCI) is a community-based non-profit organisation operating in Ibanda Kyanya Town Council, Kasese District, Uganda. The organisation was established in 2019 in response to the growing vulnerabilities affecting girls and young women, including sexual violence, early marriages, teenage pregnancies, school dropout, child labour, poverty, and harmful cultural practices.

IGCCI works with communities and stakeholders to promote child protection, education, health, gender equality, community empowerment, and sustainable development. The organisation implements community-based interventions aimed at improving the welfare and opportunities of vulnerable populations, particularly girls, children, youth, and women. Through advocacy, awareness creation, community mobilisation, and capacity-building initiatives, IGCCI seeks to address social challenges and promote positive community transformation.

1.4 Volunteer Placement and Role at IGCCI

Under the Graduate Career Accelerator Programme, the volunteer was placed at Ibanda Girls Child Care Initiative for a period of three months. The placement provided an opportunity to work within a community-based organisation and participate in activities aimed at promoting community development and social welfare.

The volunteer role involved supporting programme implementation, community engagement activities, stakeholder collaboration, awareness creation initiatives, project support activities, organisational documentation, and other assignments delegated by the organisation. The placement enabled the volunteer to apply academic knowledge in a practical setting while contributing to the achievement of organisational goals and objectives.

1.5 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to document and present the experiences, activities, achievements, skills acquired, and lessons learned during the three-month volunteer placement at Ibanda Girls Child Care Initiative (IGCCI) under the Graduate Career Accelerator Programme (GCAP) and to provide recommendations. The report provides an account of the work undertaken, the contributions made towards organisational objectives, the challenges encountered, and recommendations for improving future volunteer engagements and programme implementation.

1.6 Objectives of the Volunteer Placement

1.6.1 General Objective

To gain practical experience in community development and organisational operations while contributing to the implementation of programmes and activities at Ibanda Girls Child Care Initiative.

1.6.2 Specific Objectives

1. To support the implementation of community-based programmes and activities undertaken by IGCCI.
2. To participate in community mobilisation, stakeholder engagement, and awareness-raising initiatives aimed at improving the welfare of vulnerable populations.
3. To strengthen professional competencies in communication, teamwork, leadership, project planning, report writing, and community engagement.
4. To acquire practical knowledge and experience in the operations and management of a community-based organisation.
5. To contribute to organisational development through participation in programme implementation, documentation, fundraising, advocacy, and other organisational activities.
6. To offer capacity building and development to the organisation's staff.
7. To apply academic knowledge and skills in addressing real-life community development challenges.

1.7 Scope of the Report

The report covers the three-month volunteer placement period at Ibanda Girls Child Care Initiative in Kasese District. It focuses on activities undertaken between March, 2026 and May 2026, including programme implementation, community engagement activities, organisational support functions, achievements realised, challenges encountered, skills acquired, lessons learned, and recommendations arising from the volunteer experience.

The report is limited to activities undertaken during the volunteer placement and does not cover all programmes and operations implemented by the organisation beyond the reporting period.

1.8 Significance of the Volunteer Placement

The volunteer placement was significant to the volunteer, the host organisation, and the communities served by the organisation.

To the volunteer, the placement provided an opportunity to gain practical work experience, apply academic knowledge in a professional setting, develop technical and interpersonal skills, and enhance career readiness. The placement also improved understanding of community development approaches, programme implementation processes, stakeholder engagement, and organisational management.

To IGCCI, the volunteer placement provided additional human resource capacity to support programme implementation, community outreach, documentation and other organisational activities. The volunteer's contribution helped strengthen the organisation's ability to achieve its objectives and serve its target beneficiaries.

To the community, the placement contributed to the implementation of activities aimed at promoting community awareness, empowerment, participation, and access to information on issues affecting vulnerable populations. Through these activities, community members benefited from interventions aimed at improving their well-being and promoting sustainable development.

CHAPTER TWO: ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DURING THE VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the activities undertaken during the three-month volunteer placement at Ibanda Girls Child Care Initiative (IGCCI) under the Graduate Career Accelerator Programme (GCAP) implemented by Restless Development Uganda. The activities were implemented in support of IGCCI's mission of promoting child protection, food and nutrition security, youth empowerment, gender equality, health promotion, livelihood improvement, and community resilience.

The placement provided opportunities to engage with diverse stakeholders, including community members, schools, health facilities, SACCOs, youth groups, local leaders, and community-based organizations. Through these engagements, practical experience was gained in community mobilization, mentorship, health promotion, stakeholder engagement, monitoring and evaluation, and community development programming.

2.2 Community Nutrition and Food Security Outreach Activities

2.2.1 Overview

One of the major activities undertaken during the placement was participation in community nutrition and food security outreach programmes conducted at Kyanya Health Centre III and Rwenzori Mountaineering Service. The outreach activities aimed at improving community awareness on nutrition, maternal and child health, household food security, and preventive healthcare practices.

2.2.2 Health Facility Observations

During interactions with healthcare providers and community members, several operational challenges affecting service delivery were observed. These included high patient loads compared to available staffing levels, shortages of essential medicines and medical supplies, and limited operational resources. These challenges continue to affect access to quality healthcare services within the community.

2.2.3 Household Food Security Situation

Community interactions revealed that many households experience seasonal food insecurity, particularly during the periods of January to March and June to July. During these periods, households frequently depend on food purchases from local markets despite limited income levels, increasing their vulnerability to food shortages and nutritional challenges.

2.2.4 Nutrition Education and Counselling

Nutrition education and counselling sessions were conducted among pregnant women, lactating mothers, caregivers, and other community members. Key areas covered included maternal nutrition, infant and young child feeding practices, dietary diversity, balanced diets, food hygiene, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Participants were encouraged to utilise locally available foods to improve household nutrition and health outcomes.

2.2.5 Contribution to community development

The outreach activities contributed to strengthening community awareness on nutrition, health promotion, and food security while highlighting the importance of integrating nutrition-sensitive interventions with broader efforts aimed at addressing poverty, food insecurity, and health system challenges.

2.3 Community Engagement with SACCOs on Food Security, Climate Action, Livelihoods and Gender-Based Violence

2.3.1 Overview

The placement involved participation in community outreach engagements with SACCOs and community savings groups in Ibanda-Kyanya. These engagements focused on food security, climate change adaptation, livelihood improvement, financial inclusion, and prevention of gender-based violence.

2.3.2 Community groups engaged

The outreach activities engaged various livelihood groups involved in beekeeping, coffee production, savings and credit activities, and small-scale enterprises. These groups play an important role in strengthening household income generation and community resilience.

2.3.3 Household Food Security and Climate Challenges

Community members reported recurring food shortages, particularly during dry seasons and the months of January and February. The main coping strategies identified included purchasing food from neighbouring districts and practising small-scale irrigation farming. Community members indicated that food shortages often reduce household savings, increase indebtedness, and negatively affect household welfare.

2.3.4 Gender-Based Violence Awareness and Prevention

Community sensitisation sessions were conducted on gender-based violence prevention and response. The discussions focused on forms of gender-based violence, causes and consequences, prevention strategies, reporting mechanisms, and protection of women, children, and vulnerable groups.

2.3.5 Monitoring of Beekeeping and Enterprise Development Activities

Monitoring and follow-up visits were conducted among community members previously supported in beekeeping and enterprise development initiatives. Findings indicated that beekeeping contributes to income generation, household food purchases, healthcare expenses, and investment in other livelihood activities. Some beneficiaries had also diversified into value-addition activities such as candle production.

2.3.6 Key challenges identified

Challenges reported by beneficiaries included limited tree cover for apiary activities, weather variability, inadequate packaging and branding materials, and limited market access for bee products.

2.3.7 Contribution to community development

The outreach demonstrated the importance of integrating financial inclusion, climate resilience, livelihood development, and social protection interventions in strengthening household resilience and sustainable development.

2.4 Community Nutrition Education and Health Promotion Outreach in Hima

2.4.1 Overview

Nutrition education and health promotion activities were conducted in Hima community to improve awareness of healthy lifestyles, disease prevention, and household nutrition practices.

2.4.2 Nutrition Education and Healthy Eating Promotion

Community members received education on balanced diets, dietary diversity, consumption of fruits and vegetables, use of locally available foods, and household kitchen gardening. The sessions emphasised practical approaches for improving nutrition outcomes using locally accessible resources.

2.4.3 Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases

Awareness was raised on the prevention of non-communicable diseases through healthy eating, regular physical activity, routine health screening, and avoidance of unhealthy lifestyle practices.

2.4.4 Addressing Nutrition Myths and Misconceptions

The outreach addressed common food-related misconceptions existing within the community. Evidence-based nutrition information was provided to improve understanding of the nutritional value of various foods and encourage informed dietary choices.

2.4.5 Gender-Based Violence Awareness

Sensitisation sessions were also conducted on gender-based violence prevention and protection, emphasising the importance of safe family and community environments.

2.4.6 Contribution to Community Development

The outreach strengthened community awareness on nutrition, disease prevention, social protection, and healthy lifestyle practices, contributing to improved health-seeking behaviours and informed decision-making.

2.5 School-Based Outreach on Nutrition, WASH, Child Protection and Learner Wellbeing

2.5.1 Overview

School outreach activities were conducted in selected schools, including Busy Bee Primary School, Ibanda Primary School, and Glory Morel Nursery and Primary School. The objective was to assess and strengthen school feeding programmes, WASH systems, mentorship programmes, child protection mechanisms, and learner wellbeing.

2.5.2 Teacher Capacity Building and Mentorship

At Glory Morel Nursery and Primary School, mentorship training sessions were conducted for teachers using the What Would You Do (WWYD) mentorship approach. The training focused on supporting girls' empowerment, leadership development, confidence building, and learner wellbeing.

2.5.3 Assessment of School Feeding Programmes

Assessments revealed that most schools provide two meals per day, commonly consisting of porridge, beans, cassava, Irish potatoes, and posho. However, limited dietary diversity and inadequate inclusion of fruits and vegetables were observed due to financial constraints.

2.5.4 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Assessment

The outreach identified challenges related to safe water access, sanitation facilities, hygiene promotion, and water availability within schools. These findings highlighted the need for strengthened WASH interventions.

2.5.5 School Food Safety Assessment

Assessments were conducted on food preparation, food handling, and storage practices. Challenges identified included limited food storage facilities, inadequate food safety training, smoke exposure among cooks, and occasional water shortages.

2.5.6 Child Protection, Mental Health and Sexual and Reproductive Health

Discussions with teachers and learners explored issues related to child protection, psychosocial wellbeing, mental health, and sexual and reproductive health. The findings highlighted the importance of strengthening support systems within schools.

2.5.7 Contribution to Community Development

The school outreach activities contributed to strengthening awareness of school health, nutrition, child protection, mentorship, and learner wellbeing, supporting the creation of safer and healthier learning environments.

2.6 Youth and Vocational Skills Empowerment Activities

2.6.1 Overview

The placement involved engagement with vulnerable youth enrolled in vocational skills programmes supported by IGCCI and Kyanya Youth Empowerment Initiative.

2.6.2 Vocational Skills Training Areas

The youth were undertaking training in hairdressing, tailoring, welding, and art and craft production. Many participants included school dropouts, teenage mothers, and youth facing socioeconomic challenges.

2.6.3 Entrepreneurship Mentorship and Capacity Building

An entrepreneurship mentorship session was conducted focusing on SWOT analysis, business opportunity identification, enterprise management, and planning for business growth. The session aimed to strengthen participants' entrepreneurial thinking and self-employment potential.

2.6.4 Contribution to Youth Empowerment

The training enhanced participants' understanding of entrepreneurship and reinforced the importance of combining vocational skills with business development competencies to improve employability and self-reliance.

2.7 Theory of Change Summary of Activities Undertaken

Table 1: Theory of change

Activity Category	No. of Activities	People Reached	Inputs	Activities Undertaken	Outputs	Expected Outcomes	Expected Long-Term Impact
Community mobilization and outreach	8	30	IGCCI staff, volunteers, IEC materials, community structures	Community sensitisation and stakeholder engagement activities	Community members mobilised and engaged	Increased awareness and participation in development initiatives	Strengthened community resilience and participation
Nutrition education and health promotion	4	88	Nutrition education materials, facilitation skills, health promotion tools	Nutrition, health, and food security education sessions	Community members trained and sensitised	Improved nutrition and health knowledge	Improved household nutrition and health outcomes
School-based outreach activities	6	250	Mentorship tools, assessment tools, training materials	School assessments, mentorship sessions, WASH and child protection activities	Learners, teachers, and school leaders engaged	Improved awareness of learner wellbeing and school health	Safer and healthier learning environments
SACCO and	4	80	Community group	Community dialogues	SACCO member	Improved livelihood	Enhanced

livelihood group engagements			platforms, financial literacy knowledge, and facilitation materials	on livelihoods, climate resilience, food security and GBV	s and community groups engaged	and financial decision-making	household resilience and food security
Youth empowerment and entrepreneurship mentorship	4	60	Entrepreneurship training materials, SWOT tools, and facilitation skills	Entrepreneurship mentorship and business skills development	Youth trained and mentored	Improved employability and self-reliance	Reduced youth vulnerability and unemployment
Monitoring and evaluation visits	4	8	Monitoring tools, observation guides, reporting templates	Follow-up visits and assessment of livelihood enterprises	Beneficiary groups assessed and supported	Improved adoption of recommended practices	Sustainable livelihood development
Gender-based violence awareness sessions	3	150	IEC materials, facilitation guides, community platforms	Community sensitisation on GBV prevention and response	Community members sensitised	Increased awareness and protective behaviours	Reduced vulnerability to GBV
Stakeholder meetings and	4	8	Coordination mechanisms,	Engagements with schools, leaders,	Stakeholders consulted	Improved collaboration and	Stronger development

engagements			stakeholder networks	health facilities and community groups	and engaged	coordination	partnerships
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2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the major activities undertaken during the volunteer placement at IGCCI. The activities focused on nutrition and health promotion, food security, livelihood development, youth empowerment, school health, child protection, gender-based violence prevention, monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder engagement, and organisational documentation. Through these interventions, valuable contributions were made towards community development, organisational objectives, and strengthening community resilience. The Theory of Change summary demonstrates how the activities undertaken contributed to immediate outputs, expected outcomes, and long-term development impact.

CHAPTER THREE: ACHIEVEMENTS, SKILLS ACQUIRED AND LESSONS LEARNED

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the key achievements realised, skills acquired, and lessons learned during the volunteer placement at Ibanda Girls Child Care Initiative (IGCCI) under the Graduate Career Accelerator Programme (GCAP). The chapter highlights the contribution of the placement towards community development, organisational growth, and professional development.

3.2 Achievements during the Volunteer Placement

3.2.1 Enhanced Community Awareness on Nutrition, Health and Wellbeing

One of the major achievements of the placement was contributing to increased community awareness on nutrition, health promotion, dietary diversity, maternal and child nutrition, food security, water, sanitation and hygiene, and prevention of non-communicable diseases. Through community sensitisation sessions, community members gained knowledge on healthy lifestyles and practical approaches to improving household nutrition using locally available resources.

3.2.2 Strengthened Community Awareness and Response to Gender-Based Violence

The volunteer placement contributed to raising awareness of gender-based violence prevention, response, and protection mechanisms among community members. Community dialogues and sensitisation sessions promoted understanding of the causes and consequences of gender-based violence and encouraged the protection of women, children, and vulnerable individuals within communities.

3.2.3 Strengthened Household Food Security and Livelihood Awareness

Community engagements with SACCOs, livelihood groups, farmers, and community members strengthened awareness of food security, climate resilience, savings culture, and livelihood improvement strategies. The discussions encouraged adoption of practices that enhance household resilience, income generation, and sustainable livelihoods.

3.2.4 Increased Awareness of Climate-Smart Agriculture and Smart Irrigation Technologies

The placement contributed to promoting climate-smart agricultural practices through community sensitisation on smart irrigation technologies using the KickStart approach. Community members gained knowledge on innovative irrigation practices that can improve agricultural productivity, increase food production, and enhance resilience to climate variability and prolonged dry seasons.

3.2.5 Strengthened Support for Girls' Empowerment and Learner Wellbeing

Follow-up and monitoring activities conducted under the Girl First mentorship programme contributed to strengthening support systems for girls in schools. Engagements with teachers, mentors, and learners promoted discussions on leadership, confidence building, decision-making, personal development, and educational success.

3.2.6 Enhanced School Health, Nutrition and Child Protection Awareness

School outreach activities contributed to increased awareness of school feeding, WASH, food safety, mental health, child protection, and sexual and reproductive health issues. The assessments conducted provided useful information for strengthening learner wellbeing and creating safer and healthier school environments.

3.2.7 Strengthened Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship Skills

Entrepreneurship mentorship sessions delivered to youth enrolled in vocational skills programmes enhanced participants' understanding of business development, opportunity identification, enterprise management, and self-employment. The sessions encouraged youth to utilise their vocational skills as a pathway towards sustainable livelihoods and economic independence.

3.2.8 Improved Understanding of Community Needs and Development Priorities

Direct engagement with households, schools, health facilities, SACCOs, youth groups, and community leaders contributed to a deeper understanding of community challenges and

development priorities. Information gathered during these engagements provided valuable insights that can support future programme planning and implementation.

3.2.9 Contribution to Monitoring, Learning and Accountability

Participation in monitoring visits, field assessments, activity reporting, and documentation contributed to improved organisational learning and accountability. Information collected during programme implementation supported tracking of progress, identification of challenges, and generation of lessons for future interventions.

3.2.10 Strengthened Community Linkages and Stakeholder Relationships

The placement contributed to strengthening relationships between the organisation and key stakeholders, including schools, health facilities, SACCOs, community groups, local leaders, and other community-based organisations. These engagements promoted collaboration, information sharing, and collective action towards community development goals.

3.2.11 Contribution to Organisational Development and Visibility

A significant achievement realised during the placement was supporting organisational visibility and stakeholder engagement. Efforts made towards strengthening social media engagement, website visibility, digital communication, and LinkedIn presence contributed to increased awareness of the organisation's work among community members, partners, and stakeholders. These efforts enhanced the organisation's public profile and created opportunities for networking, partnerships, and resource mobilisation.

3.2.12 Successful Implementation of Planned Activities

The placement contributed to the successful implementation of approximately 90 per cent of planned activities during the reporting period. This achievement reflected effective teamwork, commitment, adaptability, and collaboration among organisational staff, volunteers, community leaders, and beneficiaries.

3.3 Skills acquired during the Volunteer Placement

3.3.1 Community Mobilisation and Facilitation Skills

The placement strengthened the ability to mobilise communities, facilitate discussions, conduct awareness sessions, and engage diverse groups of stakeholders in development activities.

3.3.2 Communication and Interpersonal Skills

Continuous interaction with community members, local leaders, teachers, health workers, youth groups, and partner organisations enhanced communication, listening, negotiation, and relationship-building skills.

3.3.3 Training, Mentorship and Capacity-Building Skills

Participation in mentorship programmes, nutrition education activities, and entrepreneurship training strengthened facilitation, public speaking, mentorship, and knowledge-sharing skills.

3.3.4 Monitoring and Evaluation Skills

The placement enhanced practical competencies in programme monitoring, field observation, data collection, assessment of interventions, and documentation of programme outcomes.

3.3.5 Report Writing and Documentation Skills

Regular preparation of reports, activity summaries, and field documentation strengthened technical writing, analytical thinking, and information management skills.

3.3.6 Stakeholder Engagement and Partnership-Building Skills

Working with schools, SACCOs, community groups, local leaders, health facilities, and development actors strengthened collaboration, coordination, networking, and partnership-building skills.

3.3.7 Leadership and Problem-Solving Skills

The placement provided opportunities to identify challenges, propose solutions, coordinate activities, and support implementation of community interventions, thereby strengthening leadership and problem-solving abilities.

3.3.8 Digital Communication and Organisational Visibility Skills

Participation in strengthening social media engagement, website visibility, and online networking enhanced skills in digital communication, content promotion, stakeholder engagement, and organisational branding.

3.4 Lessons learned during the Volunteer Placement

Community participation is fundamental to sustainable Development

The placement demonstrated that development interventions are more effective and sustainable when community members actively participate in identifying challenges, designing solutions, and implementing activities.

3.4.2 Integrated Approaches Produce Better Development Outcomes

Community challenges are often interconnected. Effective interventions therefore require integrated approaches that address nutrition, health, livelihoods, education, child protection, gender equality, and economic empowerment simultaneously.

3.4.3 Evidence-Based Programming Improves Programme Effectiveness

The experience highlighted the importance of conducting community assessments, stakeholder consultations, monitoring activities, and documentation to inform programme design and implementation.

3.4.4 Partnerships Strengthen Community Development Efforts

Collaboration among community organisations, schools, health facilities, government institutions, SACCOs, development partners, and community leaders enhances programme effectiveness, resource utilisation, and sustainability.

3.4.5 Sustainability Should Be Central to Development Programming

Long-term community transformation requires interventions that build local capacity, strengthen community ownership, promote self-reliance, and empower beneficiaries to continue benefiting beyond project implementation periods.

3.4.6 Youth Empowerment Requires Continuous Support and Mentorship

Vocational skills and entrepreneurship training are most effective when complemented by mentorship, access to opportunities, and continuous support systems that enable youth to transition into productive livelihoods.

3.4.7 Digital Platforms Play an Important Role in Organisational Growth

Digital communication platforms can significantly increase organisational visibility, stakeholder engagement, partnership opportunities, and dissemination of development information when effectively utilised.

3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the major achievements realised, skills acquired, and lessons learned during the volunteer placement. The placement contributed to community awareness, youth empowerment, school health promotion, food security, gender-based violence prevention, organisational visibility, stakeholder engagement, and programme implementation. It also provided valuable professional experience and strengthened competencies required for effective community development practice. The lessons learned underscore the importance of community participation, partnerships, evidence-based programming, sustainability, and continuous learning in achieving meaningful and lasting development outcomes.

CHAPTER FOUR: CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

Briefly explain that while significant achievements were realised during the placement, several challenges were observed that may affect programme implementation and organisational effectiveness. The chapter presents these challenges and proposes recommendations for improvement.

4.2 Challenges encountered during the volunteer placement

Limited Financial Resources

The organisation operates within a resource-constrained environment, which occasionally affects the implementation of planned activities and limits opportunities for expanding programme coverage. Financial limitations also constrained the acquisition of operational resources needed for effective programme delivery.

Transport and Logistical Constraints

Implementation of field activities often required travel to schools, health facilities, SACCOs, and communities located in different areas. Limited transport and logistical resources occasionally affected the frequency of follow-up visits, monitoring activities, and outreach coverage.

Need for Enhanced Communication and Coordination

Although communication mechanisms existed, there were instances where information regarding activities and schedules was communicated at short notice. This occasionally affected planning, preparation, and participation by some members and volunteers.

Limited Capacity-Building Opportunities

The placement revealed the need for more regular training and professional development opportunities for members and volunteers. Continuous capacity building would strengthen technical competencies, leadership skills, programme implementation, and organisational effectiveness.

Need to Strengthen Documentation

Effective documentation is essential for organisational learning, accountability, and programme improvement. During the placement, there was a need for more structured systems for documenting activities, lessons learned, success stories, and programme achievements.

Limited Member Participation and Engagement

While members demonstrated commitment to organisational goals, participation in some activities was lower than expected. Increased engagement would enhance teamwork, ownership, and contribution towards organisational objectives.

Need for Increased Community and Digital Engagement

Although progress was made in strengthening the organisation's online visibility, there remains a need to further expand community engagement and increase interaction on social media platforms to improve outreach, visibility, and stakeholder engagement.

4.3 Recommendations

Strengthen Resource Mobilisation

The organisation should continue strengthening proposal development, fundraising efforts, donor engagement, and strategic partnerships to increase financial sustainability and programme coverage.

Improve Transport and Operational Support

Investment in transport and logistical support would enhance community outreach, monitoring, supervision, and programme implementation efficiency.

Strengthen Internal Communication Systems

Clear communication channels and timely dissemination of information should be promoted to improve coordination, planning, and participation among members and volunteers.

Invest in Capacity Building

Regular training sessions should be organised on project management, proposal writing, leadership, monitoring and evaluation, entrepreneurship, nutrition, food security, gender-based violence prevention, and community development.

Strengthen Documentation and Reporting Systems

The organisation should establish and maintain comprehensive documentation systems to improve accountability, organisational learning, visibility, and evidence-based decision-making.

Enhance Member Engagement and Motivation

The organisation should promote active participation through regular meetings, mentorship opportunities, recognition initiatives, and involvement of members in planning and implementation processes.

Expand Community and Social Media Engagement

The organisation should continue investing in community outreach, strategic partnerships, website management, LinkedIn engagement, and social media content creation to increase visibility and attract potential supporters and partners.

4.4 Summary

Despite the identified challenges, the organisation continues to make significant contributions to community development, and addressing the highlighted areas would further strengthen programme effectiveness, sustainability, and impact.

5.1 CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

5.2 Overall Reflection on the Volunteer Placement

The three-month volunteer placement at Ibanda Girls Child Care Initiative (IGCCI) was a highly rewarding and enriching experience that provided both professional and personal growth. The placement offered a unique opportunity to apply academic knowledge in a practical community development setting while gaining valuable exposure to real-world development challenges and interventions.

Through participation in community outreach activities, school engagements, health promotion programmes, livelihood initiatives, youth empowerment activities, and stakeholder engagements, a deeper understanding was gained of the interconnected nature of development issues affecting communities. The experience strengthened appreciation for community-driven approaches, partnership building, and sustainable development interventions.

Beyond professional development, the placement provided an opportunity to experience the rich culture, environment, and hospitality of Kasese District. The district's diverse landscape, characterized by hills, rivers, and the majestic Rwenzori Mountains, offered memorable experiences that complemented the learning journey. The opportunity to visit the mountain region and observe the unique geographical features of the area provided a deeper appreciation of the local environment and its importance to community livelihoods and tourism.

The placement also created opportunities to interact closely with local communities and learn about their culture, traditions, and food systems. Exposure to indigenous foods, including traditional vegetable preparations such as cassava leaves, provided valuable insights into local dietary practices and cultural heritage. These experiences enhanced understanding of the relationship between food, culture, nutrition, and community identity.

Equally memorable was the warmth, hospitality, and cooperation demonstrated by community members, local leaders, organizational staff, and fellow volunteers throughout the placement period. Their willingness to share experiences, knowledge, and perspectives created a supportive learning environment and contributed significantly to the success of the placement.

Overall, the volunteer placement was both professionally fulfilling and personally enriching. It strengthened technical competencies, broadened perspectives on community development,

enhanced cultural appreciation, and reinforced a commitment to contributing towards sustainable development and community transformation.

5.3 Conclusion

The three-month volunteer placement at Ibanda Girls Child Care Initiative (IGCCI) under the Graduate Career Accelerator Programme (GCAP) was a valuable and transformative experience that provided practical exposure to community development work and strengthened both professional and personal competencies.

During the placement period, meaningful contributions were made towards the implementation of programmes focusing on nutrition and health promotion, food security, youth empowerment, livelihoods development, school health, child protection, gender-based violence prevention, stakeholder engagement, and organizational visibility. Through collaboration with community members, schools, health facilities, SACCOs, local leaders, and other stakeholders, the placement contributed to the achievement of organizational objectives while creating opportunities for learning and professional growth.

The experience provided practical skills in community mobilization, facilitation, mentorship, communication, stakeholder engagement, monitoring and evaluation, report writing, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving. It also enhanced understanding of the importance of evidence-based programming, community participation, partnerships, and sustainable development approaches in addressing complex community challenges.

Despite challenges encountered, the placement successfully achieved most of its planned objectives and generated valuable lessons for future programming and professional practice. The experience demonstrated that even small community-based organizations can make meaningful contributions to improving the wellbeing of vulnerable populations when supported by committed staff, volunteers, partners, and community members.

Overall, the volunteer placement strengthened my commitment to community service and development practice while providing a solid foundation for future professional engagement in the development sector. The knowledge, skills, networks, and experiences gained will continue to inform my personal growth and career aspirations, particularly in areas of community

development, food and nutrition security, public health, youth empowerment, and sustainable livelihoods.

The placement will remain a memorable and significant milestone in my professional journey, not only because of the knowledge and experience gained, but also because of the opportunity to work with dedicated communities and development practitioners in Kasese District towards the shared goal of improving lives and promoting sustainable development.

APPENDICES



Figure 1: Entrepreneurship sessions



Figure 2: SRHR SESSIONS



Figure 3: Nutrition assessment, education and counselling at Kyanya SDA Health Centre 3



Figure 4: Nutrition education and food security sessions



Figure 5: Nutrition assessment sessions



Figure 6: SACCO Group outreach on Income and Food security



Figure 7: Youth empowerment Program



Figure 8: Capacity building in schools on Girl empowerment programs



Figure 9: Bee-keeping programs



Figure 10: Monitoring and follow-up on program beneficiaries



Figure 11: Art and craft youth empowerment program



Figure 12: Community hospital engagement



Figure 13: Community nutrition education and Gender-based Violence programs



Figure 14: Food security programs



Figure 15: Girl empowerment through “What would you do game”