

Background

Hope for Children’s Health Foundation successfully conducted soft skilling innovation camps across Hoima District, with funding from GlobalGiving donors and well-wishers. The initiative targeted vulnerable adolescent girls and young women (AGYW), especially those out of school, equipping them with hands-on vocational skills and life-saving knowledge in HIV prevention, reproductive health, and gender-based violence (GBV) awareness.

Goal

The primary goal was to enhance the economic resilience of AGYW while reducing their vulnerability to early pregnancy, HIV, and social challenges. A total of 35 AGYW were trained in four key skills: beadwork (10 participants), shoemaking (9), detergent making (8), and jelly production (8). These trades were selected based on AGYW preferences and local demand.

Training took place in over 6 venues across several sub-counties in Hoima, ensuring accessibility even for AGYW from remote communities. The sessions were delivered by 6 experienced artisans, while 3 subject matter experts (SMEs) facilitated integrated Social Behaviour Change and Communication (SBCC) sessions covering health education, self-esteem building, and life skills. The inclusion of peer leaders and mentor mothers ensured strong community engagement and peer-to-peer encouragement.

A critical component of the program was the provision of childcare services, which supported 6 babies. This allowed young mothers to fully participate in the training without disruption, fostering an inclusive learning environment. AGYW demonstrated strong interest, creativity, and teamwork throughout the training. Many utilized existing materials to create unique products and expressed eagerness to continue practicing their skills post-training.

Methodology

The training methodology emphasized hands-on practice, group learning, and open discussions. This helped AGYW gain not only technical skills but also confidence and practical knowledge about their health and rights. Participants shared experiences and supported one another, which fostered a sense of belonging and motivation. Despite the overall success, several challenges were encountered. Some venues lacked adequate training materials and infrastructure, such as proper seating, shade, or rest facilities for trainers. Transport barriers affected both artisans and AGYW, leading to late arrivals and occasional absenteeism. In some locations, noise from nearby community events disrupted sessions, while a few AGYW struggled due to literacy limitations.

To address these gaps, the report recommends increasing facilitation for trainers, providing advance logistics support, and ensuring timely delivery of materials. There’s also a call to expand the program to more sub-counties and provide startup kits to AGYW so they can apply their skills for income generation.

In conclusion, the AGYW Soft Skilling Innovation Camps in Hoima empowered 35 young women with vocational and life skills, contributing to their economic independence and improved health awareness. Thanks to the generous support from GlobalGiving donors and well-wishers, these AGYW are now better equipped to shape safer and more sustainable futures for themselves and their families.

