



Building a vocational School to equip visually impaired students in Uganda with professional skills.

Project Overview



Artistic Impression for Ancilla Inclusive Professional School

THE CHALLENGE

Over 2.2 billion people globally suffer from visual impairments, with nearly 90% of them living in developing countries. In Uganda, approximately 5.9% of the population is visually impaired, and about 144,000 individuals are completely blind. Most visually impaired individuals in Uganda come from disadvantaged backgrounds and receive limited education, often ending their schooling at the primary or secondary levels, according to Dr. Charles Olaro, the Director of Curative Services at the Ministry of Health. Few Universities offer spots for them, and vocational institutions lack the necessary resources to cater to their educational needs, despite the fact that the majority would benefit from the vocational training.

According to the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), children with visual impairments are less likely to enroll in school, complete their primary education, and achieve literacy compared to their peers without disabilities.

This disparity is exacerbated by inadequate resources and accommodations for visually impaired learners in educational institutions, particularly in higher education and vocational training institutions. As a result, visually impaired individuals have limited opportunities to develop employable skills, which increases their dependence on others, and perpetuating cycles of poverty and social exclusion.

OUR STORY

In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the founder of the Music for Life Africa Foundation (MULIA) received Braille books from the USA for the Marko Lukooya Memorial Community Library. While seeking blind individuals to utilize these books, they meet Daniel Njuba, a secondary school graduate who had been unable to continue his education due to a lack of opportunities. Daniel began reading Braille storybooks to sighted children at the foundation while adhering to safety protocols.

An anonymous supporter, recognizing Daniel's potential, offered him the chance to pursue further education. However, due to his visual impairment and limited options for accessible institutions, Daniel enrolled in the Esom School of Music, where he studied vocals and keyboard. This experience highlighted the lack of educational opportunities for visually impaired students in Uganda. In response, the Music for Life Africa Foundation initiated the development of the Ancilla Inclusive Professional School. This school aims to provide vocational training and talent development for visually impaired students who have often been excluded from traditional educational settings. Currently, 30 visually impaired students, like Daniel, have shown interest in joining the Ancilla Institution, currently under development.

The long-term impact of the School is significant. It is projected to educate over 100 visually impaired and other students with disabilities annually, equipping them with skills for employment or entrepreneurship. The school has the potential to become a center of excellence for individuals with disabilities across Uganda and East Africa.

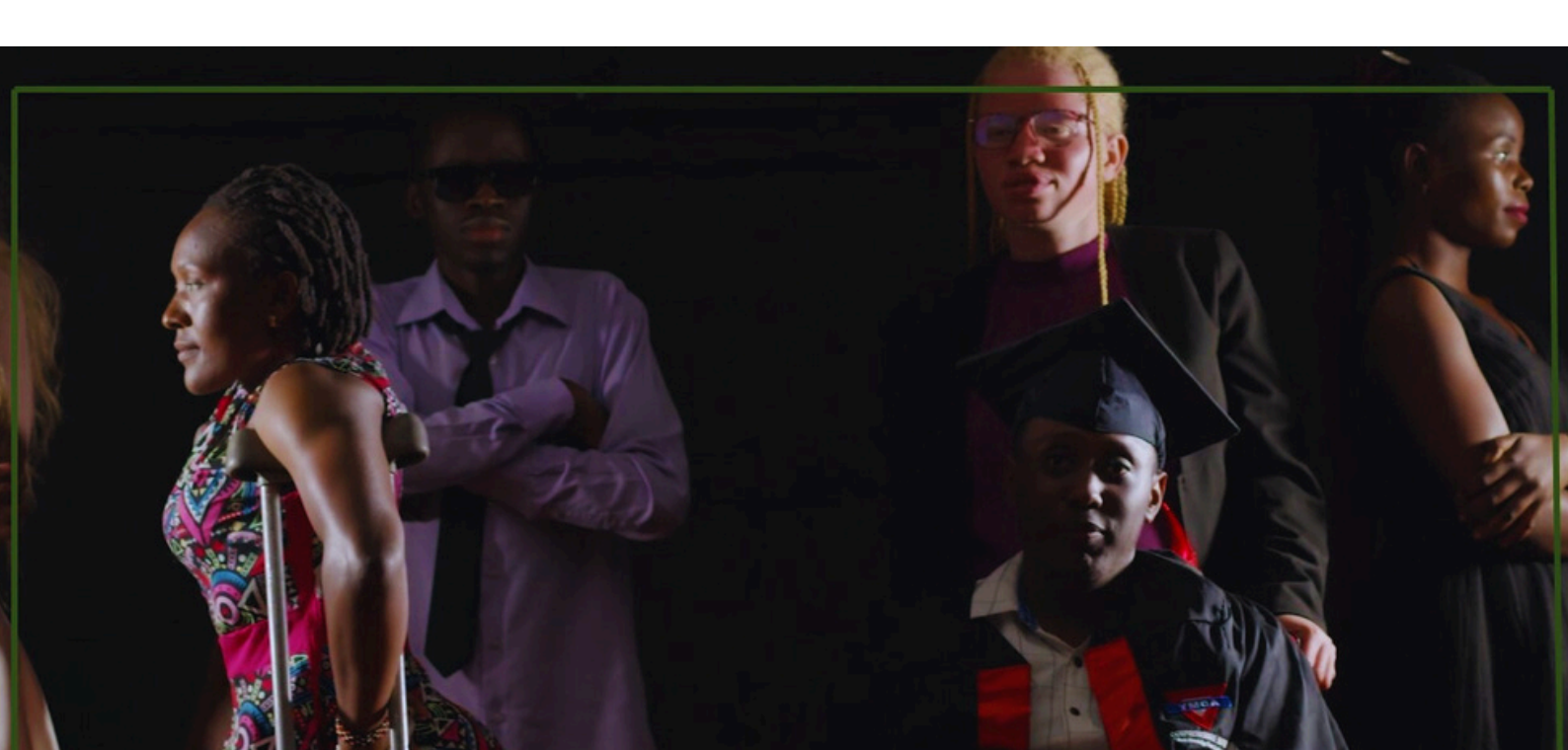


MISSION

To provide visually impaired individuals in Uganda with tailored vocational and professional training, enabling them to acquire employable skills and achieve economic independence.

VISION

A future where visually impaired individuals in Uganda can shape their own futures.



Group of people living with disability advocating for equal rights to Education and Employment opportunities.

INTERVENTIONS

1. Ancilla Inclusive Professional School:

The school will provide visually impaired individuals with comprehensive vocational and professional training in a supportive environment. Our curriculum will empower students to enter the workforce or become entrepreneurs through service provision and product development. The school will offer a diverse range of programs, including:

- **Professional Development:** Building essential skills such as counseling, project management, public speaking among others to enhance personal and career growth.
- **Vocational Skills:** Equipping students with practical expertise in areas such as hairdressing, cosmetology, body therapy among others..
- **Performing Arts:** Nurturing creative expression through music, vocal performance, comedy among others.
- **Digital Literacy:** Enhancing digital skills for communication, business, and online engagement, Assistive Technologies Management (Usage and maintenance) among others.

N.B: Over 60 courses have been identified to fit all levels of visual impairment. i.e, B11, B12, B13.

2. Advocacy for Inclusion: By collaborating with stakeholders in both the public and private sectors, we will champion the inclusion and employment of visually impaired individuals.

3. Enhancing Aducatational Access: Equip primary and secondary schools for the blind with learning materials and assistive devices to enhance their learning environment and improve learning outcomes.



Daniel in 2023

Njuba Daniel's Story

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Daniel Njuba, who is visually impaired, was identified in our community. He was leaving with his uncle because his parents' home could not accommodate him and his four siblings. Daniel follows a restricted vegetarian diet and is allergic to red meat and fish, requiring special meals preparations.

After being out of school for two years, Daniel joined our reading clubs at the Marko Lukooya Memorial Community Library. We quickly recognized his immense potential to positively impact both himself and his community. After seeing a video of Daniel on one of our communication platforms, an anonymous supporter offered to fund his education. Daniel attended the Esom School to develop his musical skills.

Currently, Daniel works for our foundation, where he facilitates reading clubs at two schools for the blind and provides vocal training and basic keyboard lessons to visually impaired individuals. He also performs at various paid events, which has allowed him to become self-sufficient and supports others in his community.

Inspired by Daniel's success, many other out-of-school blind youth have approached our foundation seeking opportunities to acquire vocational and professional skills for employment and income generation. This is one of the reasons we are embarking on establishing this project.



Visually impaired students visit to MULIA Foundation during the first phase construction of Ancilla School ready to benefit

PROGRESS

We secured land and begun construction on the first phase of the vocational institution in 2022/2023. The building is to have two floors which will include administrative offices, workshop and hands-on stations, 12 classrooms to host various courses, accommodation space for visually impaired who come from far areas. We are working towards completing the structure in 2024/2025 to commence operations.

SCALE AND APPROACH: Together with ITINGA Charity Education Foundation, we have identified over 15 primary and secondary schools for visually impaired students in central and northern Uganda. These are going to be feeder schools with students who are not able to make it at the University Level.

Currently, we directly provide educational materials and resources to Salama School for the blind primary school and Sir Appolo Kagwa Senior Secondary School blind section. We are collaborating with these schools to create a pathway for their students who may not have the opportunity to attend university to enroll in our vocational school.

The Ancilla Inclusive professional school will provide vocational training to visually impaired and other individuals with special needs across Uganda and parts of East Africa. We have over 30 visually impaired students waiting to register for their first intake once we have finalized construction.



The current status of Ancilla Inclusive Professional School construction

FINANCES

The MULIA Foundation currently generates income through performing arts and an annual charity concert. We also have individual donors who have generously funded the first phase of construction with \$80,000.

We are now focused on raising **\$44,384** to complete 80% of Phase 2, which includes the second level and partial furnishing, which will allow partial operation of the institution. The final phase 3, requires **\$24,663** for furnishing and purchase of educational equipment, bringing the project to 100% completion. In total **\$69,047** is required to fully complete the School.

To ensure sustainability on operations, we have established various revenue streams, including donations and grants, Service Learning programs, tuition fees from non-disabled students, Tutor Salary Sponsorship Program (TSSP), support from the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, and Ministry of Education special needs departmental support.

Further more, the school's operational costs will be reduced through free service offer programs from partner vocational institutions to Ancilla.

We are going to embark on fundraising events and campaigns, Income-generating activities, as well as to collaborate with various agencies to support our operations and reach more individuals, these agencies include: International Aid and Development Organizations, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives, Foundations and Philanthropic Organizations,

This collaborative approach will ensure the sustainability and success of our vocational school and keeping low cost operations for free education to PWDs.



Salama School for the blind students being addressed on the future of Inclusive Education



Hon. Minister of state for disability Asamo Grace tours the plans for Ancilla Inclusive Professional School during her visit at MULIA Foundation