

RONALD MUGAIGA

An environmentalist and founder, Ecomak Recyclers

He works with refugees in Kyaka II settlement in Kyegegwa district, western Uganda. They collect waste and sell it to his company, Ecomak Recyclers. The company, started in 2020, recycles agricultural waste into energy-saving briquettes and plastic waste into bricks and blocks, solving the challenges of waste pollution, deforestation, poverty and unemployment, while providing decent housing.

Mugaiga also sensitises the community on effective ways of waste management to conserve the environment.

The company also distributes fruit tree seedlings to the refugees and the neighbouring communities in Kyegegwa district. Mugaiga says over 2,000 seedlings have been distributed since 2020.



VIOLA NAKIMBUGWE

Founder, Sprout Up Youth and Women Initiative

Her organisational activities have impacted over 1,000 people from the islands of Sowe and Kalangala. Her organisation operates in Mpigi, Gomba and Namutumba districts.

Nakimbugwe says the non-profit organisation, empowers children, youth, teenage mothers and women in economically disadvantaged communities with entrepreneurship skills to sustain themselves. The youth and women are taught skills such as making liquid soap, crafts and briquettes. The organisation also gets market for the women and youth's products, which helps the beneficiaries earn income.



» Viola has helped over 1,000 people earn an income

DR NICHOLUS NANYEENYA

Medical, research and community engagement programme officer, Ministry of Health

At the age of six, Dr Nanyeenya noticed that his family members were continuously coughing bloody sputum and becoming emaciated, after which they succumbed to HIV/AIDS.

"Following the HIV-related catastrophes that hit our family, I started life over again in a rural setting in 1998. HIV continued ravaging communities with many succumbing to it, which they believed was witchcraft."

He recalls that this resulted in many children becoming orphans and dropping out of school due to drug abuse, teenage pregnancies and child labour, among others.

"However, despite the terror that I had experienced in my early years, I persisted with school to attain an education with a desire to contribute towards changing my community positively. My desire was that no child drops out of school or goes to bed hungry and that no patient dies because they cannot access medical care."

In 2010, Dr Nanyeenya joined Makerere University Medical School, where he devoted his free time to sensitising communities (mainly in slums, schools, churches and mosques) about HIV, reproductive health and hygiene and sanitation, to promote health and control diseases.

He also focused on youth sensitisation in schools and institutions of higher learning, advising them to stay in school and desist from premarital sex, smoking, drug abuse and alcoholism, among others.

From 2011, Dr Nanyeenya embarked on aggressive health promotion and sensitisation on TV and radio stations.



VERONIKA CEJPKOVA

Director, Whisper's Magical Children's Hospital and Maternity, Jinja



The native of the Czech Republic did a tour of East Africa that brought her to Uganda. Back home, Cejkova used to watch documentaries about Africa and dreamt about visiting the continent. She wondered if the desire would ever come to fruition. After high school, Cejkova, together with her boyfriend, saved money which they used to travel to Africa in 2009. They visited Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Uganda was their last destination and that is where Cejkova found her calling. The couple lived in Bujagali with a single father who had three children, whom they would feed and take to school. During that time, Cejkova recalls seeing many malnourished children and decided to open a home to feed them and educate their parents about proper nutrition. When she returned to London, she started saving part of her salary and fundraised to set up a non-governmental organisation in Uganda. Today, the home for the malnourished children is called Whisper's Magical Children's Hospital in Jinja.

ETIENNE SALBORN

Founder, Social Innovation Academy in Mpigi



In 2006, Etienne Salborn, a German, came to Uganda to volunteer with Kankobe Orphanage in Mpigi. The Good Samaritan nuns who operated the orphanage informed him that they could not afford to educate the children after primary school. In 2007, Salborn returned to Germany and informed his friends and relatives about the plight of the children and they fundraised for them. The children proceeded to secondary school. When Salborn learnt that the children lacked employable skills, he went back to the drawing board and formed the Social Innovation Academy in 2015, that trains social entrepreneurs at no cost. Today, 350 marginalised young people have achieved secondary education, while 60 of them have become social entrepreneurs, creating over 360 job opportunities.

JUSTINE OJAMBO

Founder of Phoebe Education Fund for Orphan (PEFO)s, vulnerable children in Jinja and Busia

Justine Ojambo's parents succumbed to HIV/AIDS when he was 14 and he was taken in by Father Wijnand Huys, a priest at Rubaga Catholic Parish in Kamuli. Father Huys ensured Ojambo got education up to university. Upon graduation, Ojambo started PEFO to help vulnerable children and orphans in Jinja and Busia. Today, Ojambo has partnered with Granny 2 Granny, a Dutch non-governmental organisation from the Netherlands, and together, they have built over 1,000 homes and taken 5,000 orphans to school since the organisation's inception in 2003.

