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The Contribution of Vocational Education Training to the Economic Empowerment of Former Street Children: A Case Study of Friends of Children Association Programme in Rubaga, Kampala

This thesis is about the contribution of vocational education training to the economic empowerment of former street children. The study used a case study of Friends of Children Association (FOCA) programme in Rubaga division, Kampala district. The period under consideration for the study was 1997- 2007. The study shows the exact skills FOCA imparts to the children such as vehicle and motorcycle mechanics, welding, hair dressing, tailoring, carpentry and joinery among others. It also looks at how viable and sustainable the skills are to the children and how they have improved their livelihoods. More so, the study looks into the challenges the graduates of FOCA encounter as they try to reintegrate into society. The study indicates that former street children like normal children need to be cared for, if Ugandans are to overcome the plight of street children. The researcher used various methods of data collection that involved interviews with key informants who included FOCA staff, the trainers and the opinion leaders. Focus group discussions with children under training; the snowball tool was used on the graduates of FOCA and above all the naturalistic observation tool was used at all levels. The study found out that the skills imparted to the children are to a large extent viable and sustainable since children chose careers of their interest and some have been able to set up their own workshops. This has greatly improved their livelihoods despite the negative attitude society still holds over them because of their past life on the streets. The study recommends that the government in liaison with Non-Government Organisations should come up with educational policies that prepare former street children with survival skills. They should implement effective integrated support packages which include micro- credit and marketing support. The Government should endeavour to register and provide both moral and financial support to charitable organisations in order to achieve their set objectives, but this calls for a monitoring and evaluation network.

Key Words: Education, Vocational, Empowerment, Children, Street