



Community-led Education Transformation in Lukwor North

COLMEAL CASE STUDY FROM THE TOGETHER PROJECT

*Community Ownership * Collaboration * Inclusion * Data-Driven * Adaptability * Accountability*

CONTEXT

In Lukwor North, a quiet village in Acholiburi Sub-County, Pader District, communities faced interlinked social challenges, including high rates of alcoholism, which deeply affected family stability, safety, and education. The village had no nursery or primary school, and no child had ever graduated, with 90% of school-aged children out of school. The only government school was 3 km away, too far for many families.

Using ColMEAL, community members reflected on their shared challenges and priorities. They identified that alcohol abuse led to family breakdowns, gender-based violence, theft, and severe neglect of children’s education. Together they identified and took steps to address these priorities.

IMPACT SNAPSHOT



Uganda



Education



Behaviour Change

APPROACH

Through the CoLMEAL approach, community members initiated a process to reflect on their shared priorities. They engaged in inclusive discussions that emphasized broad participation — not only leaders, but also women, youth, and marginalized households. This process helped to build trust and identify root problems: alcoholism and lack of access to education. Community members realized that an average drinker spends about \$200 annually on alcohol, while schooling cost only \$10 per child per year. This stark comparison highlighted that poverty was not the barrier—misplaced priorities were. Community members then identified practical steps toward addressing this priority.

RESULTS

The process led to several outcomes. **First**, the community passed a by-law restricting tavern hours to 2 pm–8 pm, significantly reducing alcohol availability and consumption.

Second, Lukwor North established two nursery and primary schools —Akweyo Parents Nursery and Primary and Success Nursery and Primary (one tavern was converted into a school building, rented by the community)—with trusted local teachers providing education alongside breakfast and lunch programs. The community’s commitment overcame resistance, particularly bar owners and some families hesitant to embrace schooling.

Third, the participatory structure ensured greater inclusion, with women and youth actively contributing to decision-making. Youth groups have started Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), engaged in vegetable farming to boost incomes, and awareness sessions on sexual and reproductive health and rights have been introduced. Members with disabilities and young women have gained confidence and actively drive community development.

Despite ongoing challenges, such as limited resources to sustain training and resistance to change, Lukwor North’s CoLMEAL Committee continues to work patiently to ensure all children attend school. This year marks the village’s first-ever kindergarten graduation—a historic milestone symbolizing the profound impact of community-led change.



LEARNING

- **Change begins with listening and trust:** Community members are more willing to engage when they feel respected and not judged.
- **Evidence empowers action:** Locally generated data can shift mindsets and drive collective decisions.
- **Community ownership is critical:** Solutions designed and enforced by the community are more sustainable than externally imposed interventions.
- **Inclusive leadership strengthens outcomes:** Involving women, youth, and marginalized groups builds legitimacy and momentum for change.

