

## **5-Year Strategic Plan: EDOU's 5 Strategic Focus Areas** *(Executive Summary)*

In our 2025-2030 strategic plan, we shall focus on these five major areas.

### **1. The Brian Mutebi Dream Scholarship Fund**

The Fund awards education scholarships to girls at risk of child marriage, survivors of violence, and orphans. The importance of this work is that the World Bank estimates that Uganda's productivity would be USD15 billion higher if teenage girls delayed pregnancy until their early twenties and acquired skills and worked, or that Uganda could save up to USD2.7 billion by 2030 if child marriages were eliminated. However, in Uganda, 1 in 4 girls aged 15-19 is either pregnant or had a baby, and only one in 10 is able to return to school after giving birth. The scholarships, therefore, give girls a second chance at education and bestow upon them a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

### **2. The Network of Indigenous Education Support Organisations in Uganda**

The Network seeks to improve governance and programming for access to education for vulnerable children in Uganda. Access to education is a game-changer in tackling systemic poverty. In Uganda, where over a million children are missing out on education, efforts to provide access to education to the poor and most vulnerable populations cannot be overstated. Several indigenous education initiatives exist in the country. However, these initiatives – mainly community-based organisations – are associated with;

- poor governance, management and organisational structures.
- the lack of safeguarding practices. There are often reports of abuse, including sexual abuse and exploitation of the children under the care of these organisations.
- the lack of networks to share experiences and best practices. The International NGOs see indigenous organisations as poorly governed and inefficient. This constrains their growth.
- the lack of technical expertise in programming, making their projects lack sound programming, making measuring impact, evaluating, and documenting good practices and lessons learned difficult.
- the lack of crucial resources to implement programs. These resources include finances – hardly any donor trusts them, and the lack of finances means they can't hire skilled personnel.

Against this background, we established the Network of Indigenous Education Support Organisations in Uganda to address five major thematic areas:

- Convening and Networking: Mobilise Indigenous education support organisations in Uganda and build a movement for education support organisations in Uganda.
- Leadership Development: Coaching and mentorship program to enhance the leadership skills of founders of indigenous education support organisations in Uganda.
- Capacity Building in safeguarding, governance, project planning and management.
- Resource mobilisation: Networking and fundraising, including managing grants for network member organisations.
- Knowledge sharing: Documentation, learning, and sharing of good practices, case studies, and lessons learned among network members and beyond, giving visibility to members' work and demonstrating the impact of our collective work.

### 3. Education Advocacy Initiative

This will encompass Strengthening Civil Society Roles in promoting transparency and accountability in Uganda's National Education Sector. It aims to improve the capacity of CSOs and communities in Uganda to promote transparency and accountability in the national education sector's policy and implementation processes. The strategic objectives of the initiative are:

- To improve the transparency, participation in, and accountability of education sector policies and programs.
- To build and strengthen the capacity of civil Society in participating and influencing government planning, budgeting, policy making and education service delivery processes.
- To mobilise citizens as right holders to play an active role in planning, implementation and monitoring of education policies and programs and use this information to hold duty bearers at all levels accountable.

### 4. The Girls Dream Labs

The Girls Dream Labs train the next generation of female entrepreneurs in Uganda. The Labs target adolescent girls and young women (15-25 years) who are at risk of child marriage and former child brides, from vulnerable and slum communities of the Kampala metropolitan area, with little or no formal education. Through training workshops, the Labs activate girls' agency and support them in designing their desired future. The Labs equip participants with skills across various facets of business and entrepreneurship, including developing business ideas, saving and investing, recordkeeping, sales and marketing, and customer care. They are equipped with the skills, knowledge, and tools to start business enterprises, setting them up for success in entrepreneurship where the odds would otherwise be against them. The Labs further offer space for coaching and peer learning through on-site visits and customised advisory. The Labs is a unique entrepreneurship hive that offers adolescent girls and young women opportunities to dream, incubate, and nurture business ideas.

For adolescent girls in schools, the Labs focus on sensitisation on the rights to education, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), prevention of gender-based violence, including sexual violence and exploitation, bullying in school, prevention of the spread of HIV and advancement of climate justice. By delving into these diverse subjects, the Girls Dream Labs is a holistic program that improves the economic livelihoods, health, and well-being of adolescent girls and young women.

### 5. Advocacy to end child marriage and all forms of violence against children

Child marriage is the worst form of sexual abuse and exploitation of children. EDOU engages key decision-makers at local, sub-national, national, and international levels to end child marriage and create safe spaces for children to thrive. At the local level, EDOU engages schools and communities and raises awareness on the girls' rights to education, gender inequalities and harmful cultural and religious practices, especially child marriage and female genital mutilation. Working with Girls Not Brides Uganda Partnership (GNBU), an alliance of 145 CSOs working to end child marriage in Uganda, EDOU works to build an understanding of what it will take to end child marriage through advocacy for progressive laws, policies, and programs, including community-based interventions and institutional capacity strengthening. Child marriages in Uganda are at 24%, and 56% of women have experienced some form of violence. For women in the lowest economic



status, where the majority of child brides fall, the percentage is even higher, 63%. Child brides are particularly vulnerable because of the unequal power relationships with their older 'husbands'. Child brides and teenage mothers are more likely to suffer complications like prolonged and obstructed labour, often resulting in obstetric fistula. Research shows that a girl between the ages of 15 and 19 is twice as likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth compared to a woman in her 20s. If she is under 15, the risks are 5 times higher. This is because their bodies are not physiologically mature and ready to handle childbirth.

At national and international levels, EDOU conducts research, in partnership with GNBU, produces knowledge products, and convenes the annual regional and national Girl Summits, which bring together stakeholders to deliberate on actions and promote accountability for girls' rights. In 2024, EDOU led GNBU's consultative process to develop a [Shadow Report](#) on Child Marriage in Uganda, culminating in the [List of Issues](#) for Uganda's review before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva.