

Elevating Women and Youth Through Vocational Education

Uganda Impact Report 2025



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Project Overview

Inter-Cultur and the **Companionship for Work Association (COWA)** are implementing a four-year initiative (2025 to 2028) in Kampala and Wakiso districts, Uganda. Funded by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs with a budget of €500,000, the project works to empower women, youth, and educators through gender equality programming, digital skills training, vocational education, and infrastructure upgrades.

The project is organised around three interconnected outcomes:

Outcome 1. Enhanced gender equality and technological empowerment for women and girls	Outcome 2. Transformed learning environments and educator capacities in partner schools	Outcome 3. Economically empowered youth through vocational training and entrepreneurship
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COWA operates two campuses, **COWA CVTS** in Nsambya and **COWA VTC** in Kireka, offering courses in hairdressing, agribusiness, domestic electricity, welding, hospitality, and carpentry. This report presents findings from four internal surveys conducted between May and November 2025 (covering digital skills adoption, educator professional development, and graduate employment outcomes), alongside the independent **Gender Baseline Assessment** conducted in June 2025 by AVSI Foundation across 329 community members in Makindye (Kampala) and Kira (Wakiso) divisions.

187 Students enrolled across both campuses in 2025	12 Active industry partnerships for internships and job placement	38 Educators surveyed on professional practice adoption	44 Vocational graduates surveyed on employment outcomes
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The Gender Baseline Assessment establishes starting values for Outcome Indicator 1.0 and Output Indicator 1.1; a follow-up study in Year 4 (2028) will measure change. The kitchen lab was completed in December 2025, with training activities starting during 2026. The carpentry workshop will be renovated across 2026 to 2027, so its activities will not begin until Year 4 (2028). Facility-use reporting under IM 2.2 will follow each space coming online.

Outcome 1 — Gender Equality and Digital Empowerment

Output 1.1 — Gender equality baseline (IM 1.0, IM 1.1)

IM 1.0. Change in knowledge, attitudes and practices around gender equality among women, youth, and community members.

IM 1.1. Proportion of community members reporting increased awareness of gender equality issues.

Between April and May 2025, AVSI Foundation conducted an independent **Gender Baseline Assessment** across Makindye (Kampala) and Kira (Wakiso) divisions, the two zones in which COWA operates, with the final report delivered in June 2025. The study surveyed **329 community members** (256 women and 73 men) using a mixed-methods design, combining a structured quantitative survey with focus group discussions and key-informant interviews. These results establish the starting values for IM 1.0 and IM 1.1; a follow-up assessment in **Year 4 (2028)** will measure change.

Because this is a baseline, the figures below describe the current state of attitudes, access, and autonomy in the two divisions, not impact from the project.

329 Community members surveyed (256 women, 73 men)	96% Agree girls should have equal access to education	88% View gender-based violence as harmful	90% Know where to report GBV cases
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Attitudes: public support strong, private sphere lags

Community attitudes show broad progress in public life but weaker equity at home. A large majority agree that women can lead businesses (89%) and hold leadership positions (80%), yet only 63% feel women have equal say in household decisions. Support for women’s equal access

to ICT-related training sits at 68%, and 86% of respondents still agree that “men are better suited for technical or ICT roles.”

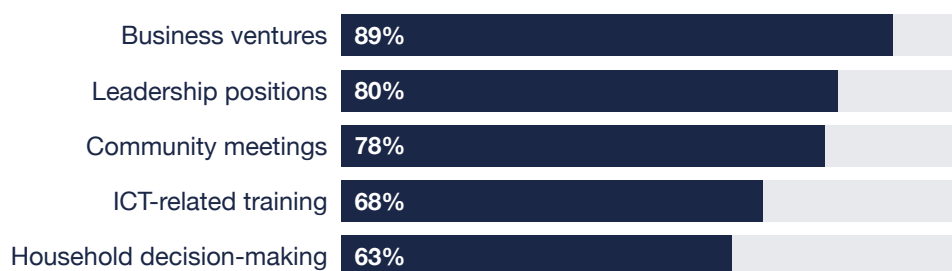


Figure 1. Community perception that women have equal opportunity, by domain (n=329)

Autonomy and access to gender programming

Exposure to gender-equality discussions is low, and women face additional barriers. **78% of women** (vs 55% of men) had never attended a training, workshop, or discussion on gender equality. **67% of women** need permission to attend a training (predominantly from spouses), compared to 45% of men.

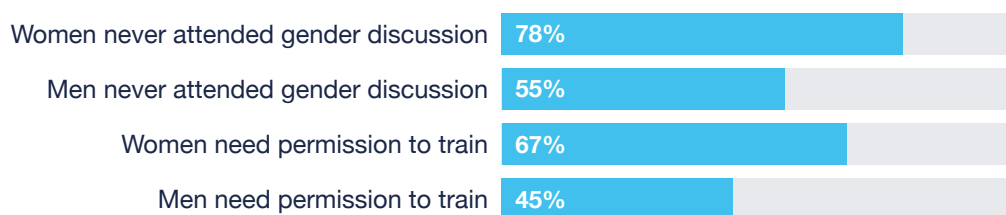


Figure 2. Gendered gap in autonomy and exposure to gender programming (n=329)

ICT access and household control

Basic digital connectivity is widespread: 96% of respondents used ICT to communicate in the past three months. However, use drops sharply for economic and educational purposes. Only 33% used ICT to start or manage a business, and just 29% for online learning. In parallel, 36% of respondents report that **only men** control household resources (money, phones, land) versus 16% who say only women, a power imbalance that constrains women’s ability to act on new skills.

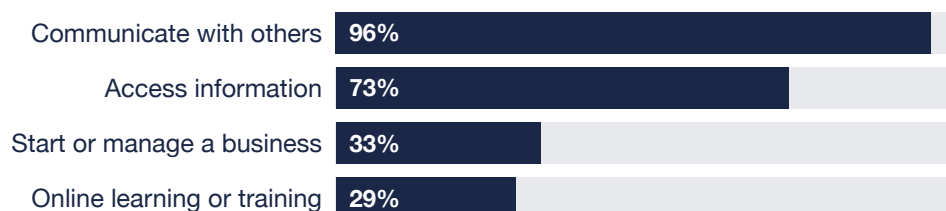


Figure 3. ICT use by purpose in the past 3 months (n=329)

Output 1.2 – Digital skills adoption (IM 1.2)

IM 1.2. Percentage of women who report using ICT skills to improve their personal or professional lives.

18 women completed the digital skills survey following Technology Skills Development Workshops at both COWA campuses. All respondents confirmed that they use digital skills to pursue personal or professional goals, and 94% applied them at least once in the four weeks before the survey. The programme achieved a Net Promoter Score of **9.3 out of 10**.

100% Use digital skills for a personal or professional goal	94% Applied digital skills in the past 4 weeks	9.3 Net Promoter Score (0 to 10)
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Frequency of use

Half of respondents apply their digital skills **sometimes** in a given four-week period, and 28% use them **all the time**. One respondent (6%) had not applied digital skills in the past four weeks, although she still reported that she uses them in general.



Figure 4. Frequency of digital skill use in the past 4 weeks (n=18)

Areas of application

Communication and self-directed learning dominate. 83% of participants apply digital skills to **communication and collaboration** and 78% to **finding information or self-learning**. Nearly half (44%) apply skills to work-related tasks.

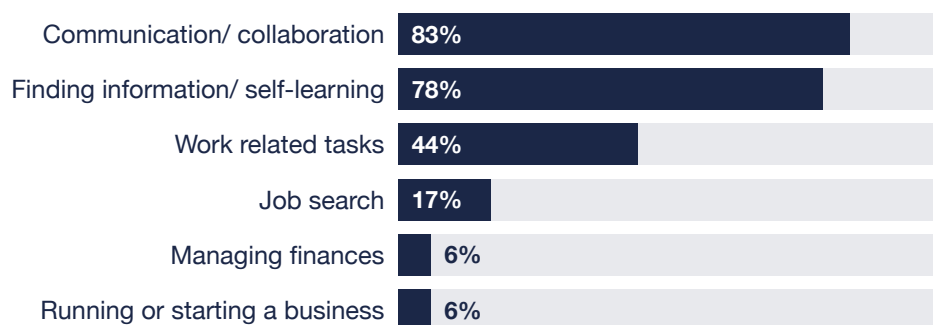


Figure 5. Digital skill application areas (multi-select, n=18)

Self-reported outcomes



Barriers to wider use

Despite strong adoption, participants face real obstacles. **Lack of time** and **internet cost or quality** are the two biggest barriers, structural challenges that require community-level responses.

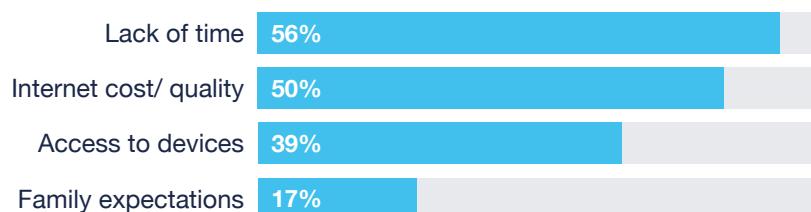


Figure 6. Barriers limiting digital skill use (multi-select, n=18)

Outcome 2 — Educator Development

IM 2.0. Percentage of educators consistently applying at least one new pedagogical practice within three months of training.

IM 2.1. Percentage of educational staff reporting positive changes in their professional practices post-training.

38 educators (after removing 13 duplicate email submissions from 51 raw rows) took the Educator Practice Adoption Survey across both COWA campuses. 23 identified as teaching staff; the practice-adoption, frequency-of-use, and post-training-change items below were answered by teaching staff only, so they are analysed over that group. The overall rating, coaching, and additionality items were answered by all 38 respondents.

Applying the training

Every teaching-staff respondent who answered the application question rated their ability to apply the training as **Good**, **Very good**, or **Excellent**, with 48% rating themselves **Excellent**. 77% of those who answered the frequency question used the new practices often or all the time in a typical four-week period.

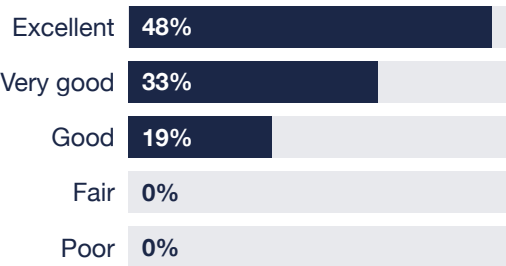


Fig 7. Self-rated application level (n=21)

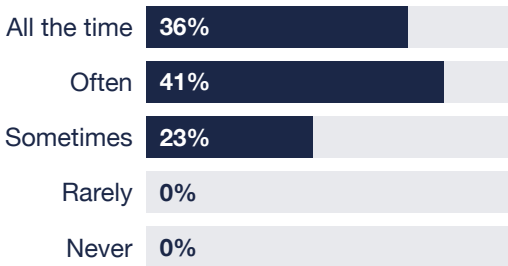


Fig 8. Frequency of new practice use (n=22)



Positive changes post-training

Teaching staff rated three specific areas of professional change after the training. **Learner engagement** leads at 91% agree-or-above, followed by **collaboration with colleagues** (87%) and **professional confidence** (87%).

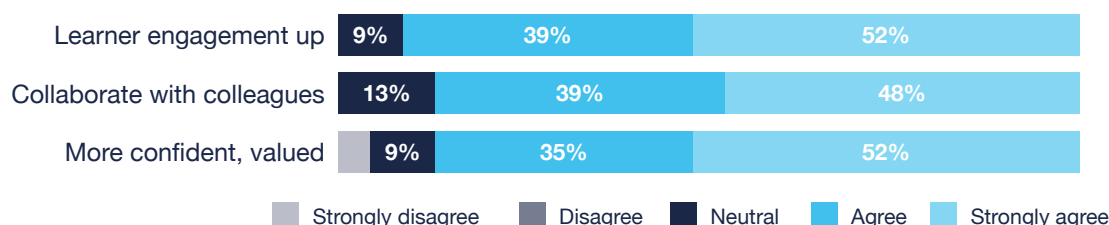


Figure 9. Post-training change, distribution on 5-point agreement scale (n=23)

Overall impact and sustainability

All 38 educators rated the overall positive change from training at an average of **4.3 out of 5**, with 87% giving a rating of 4 or 5 (“significant” to “transformational”). Trainer coaching was rated **8.1 out of 10** (n=38).

Where educators answered the sustainability items (n=18 to 19 per domain), belief in persistent change is high across all four outcome domains (attendance, attentiveness, assessment scores, workflow), with average ratings between 4.26 and 4.50 out of 5.

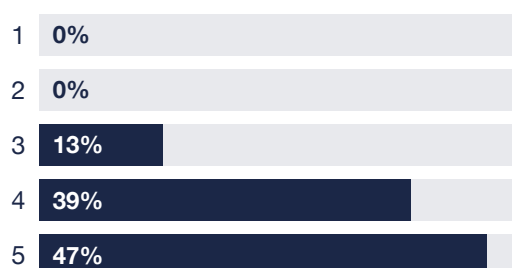


Fig 10. Professional change rating, 1 to 5 (n=38)

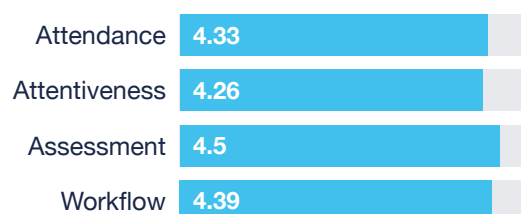


Fig 11. Sustainability belief, average 1 to 5 (n=18 to 19)

Additionality. When asked whether they would have adopted these practices on their own without the programme, 38 educators rated this at **2.8 out of 5**, slightly below the neutral midpoint. A majority (53%) disagreed, but a sizeable minority (37%) agreed. The score is consistent with the programme contributing meaningfully to the observed changes, rather than confirming full attribution.

Infrastructure development (IM 2.2)

The **kitchen lab** was completed in December 2025, and training activities will start during 2026; the first activity counts will appear in the next reporting period. The **carpentry workshop** will be renovated across 2026 to 2027, so its formal educational activities will not begin until Year 4 (2028) and will be reported from that point onward.

Outcome 3 — Vocational Training Graduates

IM 3.0. Number and percentage of graduates securing employment or establishing their own enterprise within 6 months of completion.

IM 3.1. Students enrolled in supported programmes.

IM 3.2. Active industry partnerships for internships and job placements.

44 vocational training graduates (27 women and 17 men) completed the follow-up survey, drawn from 48 raw submissions after removing 3 repeat entries and 1 non-consenting response. Graduates came from both COWA campuses across five trades: hairdressing, domestic electricity, hospitality, welding and metal fabrication, and agribusiness.

The Outcome 3 model is designed to attack two of the largest barriers identified by the gender baseline. **Cost** was the single biggest reason community members had not enrolled in vocational training (33% of women, 35% of men); COWA addresses this directly by financing 83% of graduates on full scholarship. **Lack of post-training support** was the other gap, with only 10% of trainees in the wider community having received any job-placement or business-start support; COWA’s 12 active industry partnerships are the project’s response.

187	61%	12	83%
Students enrolled in 2025	Employed or self-employed	Active industry partnerships	Financed by full scholarship

Current economic activity

61% of surveyed graduates are currently employed or operating their own enterprise (39% in paid employment and 23% self-employed). 25% remain unemployed and actively seeking work, 9% are pursuing further studies, and 5% are engaged in unpaid family work. Trade participation is broadly balanced across the five courses offered.

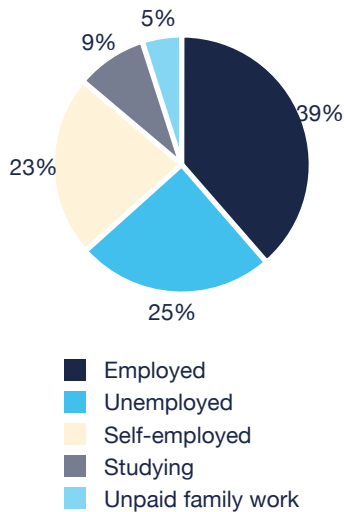


Fig 12. Current economic activity (n=44)

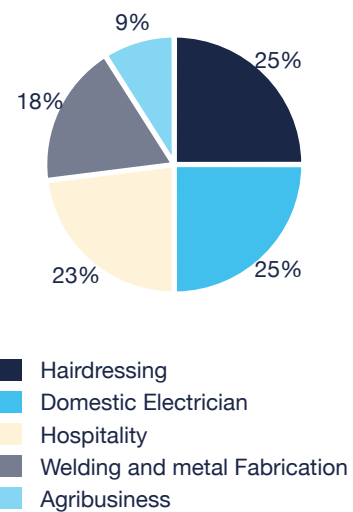


Fig 13. Trade qualification (n=44)

Time to employment

39% of all survey respondents secured employment or started their enterprise within six months of graduation, a key IM 3.0 target. Of the other currently-employed graduates, 3 found work after the six-month mark and 5 were already employed during their training at COWA. The remaining respondents were either unemployed and seeking work, engaged in unpaid family work, or in further study.

Earnings

The 16 graduates who reported a take-home figure earn a **median of UGX 195,000 per month** (interquartile range UGX 150,000 to UGX 275,000). The Year-4 follow-up will track this figure as the cohort grows and matures in the labour market; for context, Uganda's lower-bound minimum wage benchmarks sit well below this median, so the typical COWA graduate is earning a real wage in the formal or informal sector rather than subsistence-level returns.

Course financing

Access to training finance is the key enabler. **83% of surveyed graduates received full scholarships**, allowing economically disadvantaged youth to participate in vocational training that would otherwise be out of reach.

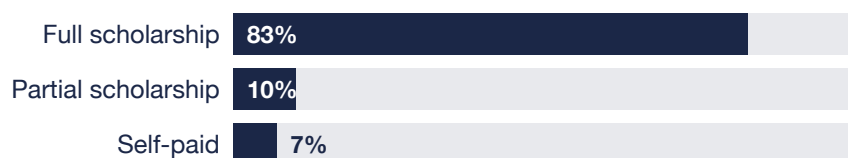


Figure 14. How graduates financed their course (n=44)

Gender and trade choice

The gender baseline showed how strongly community aspirations are shaped by traditional roles: women dominate interest in hairdressing, fashion, and catering, while men dominate domestic electrician, motor mechanics, and computer courses. COWA's actual graduate cohort largely mirrors this pattern, but with two notable exceptions: **4 of 11 Domestic Electrician graduates are women** (36%), and Agribusiness is now 75% female. Hairdressing and Hospitality remain almost entirely female, while Welding and Metal Fabrication remains entirely male. The figures suggest a gradual entry of women into one male-coded trade (domestic electricity), and identify the two areas where targeted female recruitment would have the largest counter-stereotype effect.

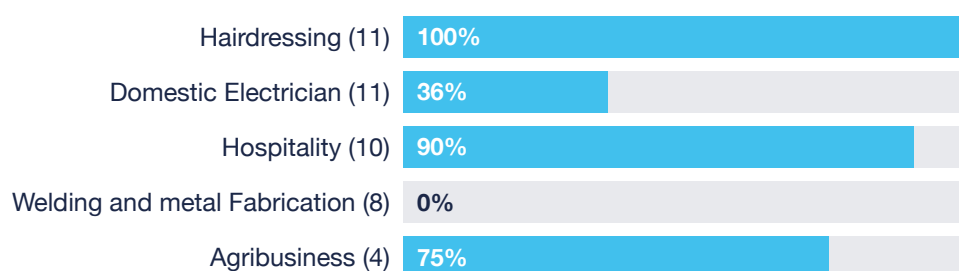


Figure 15. Share of women by trade (n=44). Trade total in parentheses; the unfilled portion of each bar represents male graduates.

Graduate voices

"Through COWA's training, I learned many skills I didn't know before. They gave me the opportunity to use their greenhouse facilities to start my own business, which has been a huge boost."

Agribusiness graduate, COWA CVTS

"The day I finished primary school, I felt like everything had ended. But then came COWA. They pushed. They believed in me more than I believed in myself. I learned skills, yes, but more than that, I found confidence."

Graduate, COWA VTC

Summary of Key Findings

The 2025 data, from four COWA internal surveys together with the independent AVSI Gender Baseline Assessment, gives a first comprehensive picture of where the project starts and what is already working.

Digital Skills (Output 1.2)	Educator Development (IM 2.0 and 2.1)	Graduate Employment (IM 3.0 to 3.2)
100% Using digital skills in general	4.3 Avg professional change rating, 1 to 5 (n=38)	61% Currently employed or self-employed
94% Applied skills in past 4 weeks	100% Of teaching staff rate application as good or better (n=21)	187 Students enrolled (T2 2025)
9.3 Net Promoter Score (out of 10)	77% Use new practices often or always (n=22)	12 Active industry partnerships
89% Confident handling online tasks		83% Financed by full scholarship

What the data shows

The gender baseline establishes the starting point. Across 329 respondents (256 women, 73 men), community attitudes toward girls' education (96% support) and public leadership (80%) are strongly positive, but the private sphere lags: only 63% feel women have equal say in household decisions, and 67% of women need permission to attend training. The Year-4 (2028) follow-up will measure change against these starting values.

Digital empowerment is working. All surveyed women report using digital skills, and 94% had applied them in the past four weeks. Self-reported confidence, time and money savings, and career advancement are all strong. The programme's NPS of 9.3 reflects high participant satisfaction. Structural barriers like internet costs and access to devices remain and require continued systemic attention.

Educator training is translating into classroom change. After deduplicating 13 repeat submissions, 23 teaching staff (of 38 total respondents) report meaningful improvements in learner engagement (91%), collaboration (87%), and professional confidence (87%), all measured over the 23 teaching staff who answered these items. The additionality score (2.8 out of 5) sits slightly below neutral, suggesting the programme contributed to these changes, though a third of educators believed they might have adopted some practices on their own. Where educators rated sustainability, belief is strong across all four outcome domains (averages 4.26 to 4.50 out of 5).

Vocational training is opening economic pathways. 61% of surveyed graduates are economically active in paid employment or self-employment, and 39% of all respondents secured employment or started an enterprise within six months of graduation. The 16 graduates who reported income earn a median of UGX 195,000 per month, well above subsistence-level returns. The scholarship model (83% received full scholarships) directly attacks the cost barrier identified in the baseline, and the 12 active industry partnerships address the post-training-support gap. The data also shows early but real movement of women into one male-coded trade (36% of Domestic Electrician graduates are women), while Welding and Metal Fabrication remains entirely male. A quarter of respondents remain unemployed and seeking work, pointing to a clear priority for expanding placement support in the next period.

Data collected May to November 2025.



Implemented by Inter-Cultur Finland in partnership with the Companionship for Work Association (COWA), with the support of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.