



Jesuit Worldwide Learning

Higher Education at the Margins

Research Report

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Higher Education Nurturing Agents of Change at the Margins

Meet Lukambo: a man with a dream

This research seeks to evaluate the impact of graduates of the Diploma in Liberal Studies (accredited by Regis University, USA, and delivered by JWL) on their respective communities through the perspectives of community members, by focusing on five case studies in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya. In this third case study, we introduce the story of Lukambo, a community-based organisation's leader, a teacher and role model in the community. By analysing the voices of his community members, this report reveals how Lukambo's visionary and trustworthy leadership skills inspire youth to serve the community, facilitate the social and financial development of his community through skill-building, and increased food and household supply accessibility.

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1. Introduction

Lukambo (also known as Luundo or Glory) is a Congolese youth who arrived in Kakuma Refugee Camp seven years ago. In 2018, he joined Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL) to study the Diploma in Liberal Studies (accredited by Regis University). He chose Business as his concentration and graduated in 2020, after which he continued his academic journey with a Bachelor's in Healthcare Management at Southern New Hampshire University. Today, Lukambo is a part-time learning facilitator for an organisation providing refugee education, Amala Kenya,

teaching social entrepreneurship, ethical leadership, and for JWL, facilitating inclusion through sports. He is also the co-founder and secretary of Vijana Twaweza Club (VTC), an organisation engaging in permaculture activities, including fish, crop, cricket, and duck farming, to fight malnutrition and environmental degradation in Kakuma. Anchored in the testimonies of friends, family members, colleagues, community leaders,¹ this case study shows how Lukambo, a visionary, seeks to make the lives of his community members healthier and more sustainable.



Figure 1: Lukambo behind the fishponds in VTC

¹ KKF1: Lukambo and VTC member's friend and teacher, KKF2: Block leader and VTC volunteer, KKF3: Former classmate and friend of Lukambo, KKF4: Former colleague at JWL, KKF5: Close family member and VTC colleague



2. Personal characteristics: a visionary, a leader, and a role model

1.1 A visionary

When Lukambo first joined the Diploma programme in 2018, he was inspired to turn his farming hobby into a sustainable organisation that could benefit the community. He thought of creating a fish farm in Kakuma which meant harvesting fish in a desertic environment and developing his farming activity to a bigger scale to meet the nutritional needs of Kakuma's residents. In 2020, Lukambo reaped the fruit of his labour as VTC gained momentum, benefiting from international donors' financial support. These funds enabled VTC to build fishponds and develop a sustainable fish farm. While the project is now a success, Lukambo endured a lot of criticism when first developing this idea, as noted by the chairlady of the block community:

"It is difficult for someone to keep fish in the camp because this place is desert and the sun, even when he was starting his farming, people were telling him you will not succeed. He just continued like that and that is how he succeeded." (KKF2)

However, with his passion and resilience, he persevered in making this project a success. This drive to make his vision a reality, overcoming structural, environmental, and financial challenges, is highlighted by a participant who sees Lukambo's courage and commitment as unique:

"Lukambo is committed to the community, not just by completing the educational journey, but

also-, for example, there is this specific project, which Lukambo came up with, it is called the Vijana Twaweza. When you look at that project, not everyone dares to take such project. Here in Kakuma, we don't have water, that project needs water, it needs a lot of commitment. I personally, when he talked to me, I wasn't really convinced, I tried to think about why he can't, although I didn't disclose to him [...]. But he went ahead and started, he tried to develop and grow those fishes, the fishpond now it is becoming something from nothing, he changed the whole community perception that Kakuma can be an agricultural Centre of development. I think if he had support and someone can support him, he can change the food security in this Kakuma, and they have already started supplying these fish. [...]. So, this is how I [...] came to know Lukambo, is not just that young student, but now he is taking very courageous steps in developing the community." (KKF4)

According to the same participant, this resilience and courage to make such an ambitious project a reality comes from his Diploma programme education:



Figure 2: VTC entry sign



“For me, he's not like any other person, because not everyone has the courage to take on something which is difficult. [...] when he joined this education, most of the people concentrated on their own life, like whatever I do, that is enough. [...] I do it for myself. But for him, he moved beyond that, beyond personal development, and gives back to the community he is in. He mobilises for youths, he makes sure they work on his project, it is difficult, since there is no water. In fact, me personally, I couldn't have thought of taking that project. So, for me he is a very strong person, from that perspective, [...] it is not easy for me to convince people when there is no water, like let's fish now [...]. So, he convinced these people, it is possible. We can come together and make it happen, and it indeed happened.”

– KKF4

1.2 Passion

The VTC project was possible because of Lukambo's passion for his work and commitment to his community. One of the participants emphasised that Lukambo is:

“The most outstanding, is that he is committed, extremely committed, he loves his job, [...]” (KKF1).

Without this intrinsic passion, the project would have fallen apart, especially as he endured criticism from his community members, according to his close family member:

“The truth is most of them that I know very well, they do think like he is wasting his time. That's the truth. They used to tell me 'In those days that [Lukambo] used to learn a lot, why? Will he become one day President of this country of DRC Congo' so they think like he's wasting just time.” (KKF5)

This passion to serve the community will not cease any time soon, as this respondent states that:

“[...] he is still committed in the community activities and he's still achieving and going further in assisting the community, the youths, and the children the community.” (KKF2)

1.3 Commitment

Being committed is intrinsic to Lukambo's community engagement, and this has not gone unnoticed by the community. His former colleague illustrates that he is always busy with activities related to community and advocacy:

“I've never seen Lukambo telling me today he is going for football. Even if maybe, he wants, you don't see Lukambo is dancing in the community somewhere. Lukambo is always busy, caring himself engaging in a very big different communities' activities, he is either in school learning, he's either teaching or leading his group for different meetings or engagement for advocacy, this is what I believe is making very big different and he committed always somewhere.” (KKF4)

While his level of commitment distinguishes him from the rest of his peers, his drive to commit to different professional activities is identified as being anchored in his Diploma studies:

“It is the benefit of the diploma, [...] because I know him sometimes, he commits himself to many things. So, I don't know if it's surely the diploma that helps him all [...], but I can say diploma contributes a lot to it [...]” (KKF5)



This embodiment of commitment is contagious, inspiring community members to do the same, as described by this participant:



“As a teacher he has taught me [...] I can say the value of being committed, you know, sometime to me when they can say when the sleep is so sweet. I feel like giving an excuse, like, ah, I call the head teacher and say that I’m not feeling well today. But like, he is my role model and because he is that committed, I also decided to be committed to my work.”

– KKF1

She further reveals that Lukambo’s commitment translates not only into empowering the community, but also into his own empowerment:

“Yes, I can see because like he’s more committed now. And it’s like he’s trying to shift the power he’s having to into others, like he’s more empowered.” (KKF1)

1.1 A leader uplifting others

1.1.1 Trustworthy

His community members often associated Lukambo’s personality traits with those of a trustworthy leader. They note how he is trusted as a facilitator to ensure that youth pursue and complete their education, including by communities that would not normally encourage the education of women and girls.

“In African culture, when [...] they can convince that parent of the girl child to allow the girls to go to classes to learn, and this is a very big achievement. If he convinced the girl child parent

to go and study then they can do anything, they trusted him.” (KKF4)

The same respondent adds that Lukambo is seen as someone “whom you can trust and allow him to take charge of any other project in the future.” (KKF4)

This trust in Lukambo has made him sought after by anyone who feels the need to share their issues:

“Because of the way his actions, his commitment, and the way he doesn’t favour. Even if you come for his advice and you are wrong, he will tell you that you have done it wrong. [...] And he will always take your case with confidentiality, he will not share it with anyone. [...] he is the one person who you can trust with secret issues.” (KKF3)

This special trust and leadership that Lukambo embodies originates from his time in the Diploma programme, as described by his former workmate:

“Lukambo changed, [...] Lukambo is [...] very young guy who came to the diploma without any content of leadership. But after the diploma he developed, even within the Centre, the way he presented himself, he showed that character of leadership, whereby we all see, Lukambo can be trusted to deliver even the content of the courses. [...] he’s one of those people who showed that characteristic of dependable leadership. So, it is like he changed completely from a young student to an all-round person who is grown to take a leadership position.” (KKF4)

1.1.2 Problem solver

Participants highlighted Lukambo’s problem-solving skills as part of his leadership skills. One respondent reveals how Lukambo addressed challenges within his team:

“[...], sometimes he might have cases with the whole team, and they might even quarrel then



when the payment delays [...]. Then with such issues [...] if it could be me, I swear I could have given up. But for Luundo, he continued to like them, and then even now, that Vijana Twaweza still exists [...]. In that all thing and pressure by the members, he never gave up, he shows leadership in such situations [...].” (KKF3)

Beyond applying his problem-solving skills in VTC, Lukambo also demonstrated his conflict mitigation skills as an onsite facilitator for JWL whenever there was a misunderstanding between students during heated discussions:

“[...] so, most of us we used to disagree sometimes because let’s say if your point is not considered and you think is the best ever, that it feels like it hurts you. So, at this stage, you do affect others. So, he come up with a plan not to do that. But he thoughts ‘come and try to defend’ [...]. We do feel like it affects us, and he is there to correct us and make us come to one common understanding many times.” (KKF5)

As his problem-solving skills became notorious in the student community, he was eventually elected as a student representative for his cohort during his studies at Southern New Hampshire University:

“For me, Lüundo is always peacemaker. [...] I remember, Luundo is someone who can use music and poems and talk to bring everyone together. So, the consequences, is [...], several time, know I always use that to become someone who can bring peace or unity within our organisation of students. For example, recently he was elected as a new SNHU student representative, since the former president of the student left, when we have an agreement about the current issue and we used Lukambo as common person to seek the ground, he’s not someone who can jump to a conclusion, he always takes his time to respond rather than react.” (KKF4)



Figure 3: Lukambo visiting VTC poultry



1.1.3 Intercultural leadership: building communities beyond his origins

In addition to his problem-solving skills, Lukambo's leadership has been characterised as embracing values of equality and inclusion (KKF3). As his understanding of community is defined beyond ethnic and cultural preferences, Lukambo's intercultural sensitivity is mostly reflected in the diversity of the people who work within his organisation:

"Luundo is unique his own way. [...] for me, most persons here may be so choosy with their nationalities. But for Luundo, he wanted to have multinational group because even if you look Club, Vijana Twaweza and also his friends, we'll get that South Sudanese and other nationalities are working with him and are his best friends, that mean that he is not only interacting with his nationality Congolese people but also others." (KKF3)

Strengthened during his Diploma studies, this intercultural competence is also prominent in his capacity as an onsite facilitator, teaching anyone regardless of their cultural background. This respondent explains this point as:

"He has grown from just a mere student to a person who can take responsibility and deliver the project. For example, I talked about the Centre he is handling. Despite the differences of the cultures with a student, I never had any conflict between him and the people who he was teaching. They were almost either older than him or the same age with him, but he handles all those people, this is the example I have, if this guy is going to handle such kind of dynamic, people who are coming from different cultural background at the same time handling them without any conflict. And he made sure they completed these courses, then he is developing up...kind of professional, whom you can trust and

allow him to take charge of any other project in the future." (KKF4)

These values of inclusion and equality are passed on to community members, as depicted by this respondent:



"I have learned from him much because I see he is someone who loves his people, who doesn't [...] like tribalism. He loves all people, Yeah, he loves equality."

– KKF2

1.1.4 Time-management skills

Lukambo's leadership skills are enhanced by his time-management skills that enable him to engage in multiple activities. His close relative describes him as able to manage different projects simultaneously, making him "free" and "fit" as a professional:

"One of the differences I see is he does many jobs at the same time. And he does get time to do all of that, then for example a teacher goes to school from morning to evening, [...] he is also a teacher like other teachers teaching at JWL, and he taught me and also, he is teaching in Amala an Institution like JWL [...]. What differentiates him is he always just gets time to do other things. So, I can say professionally he is freer and more fit than other professionals as he can multitask." (KKF5)

This capacity to handle multiple responsibilities successfully is an inspiration to the rest of the community, as underlined by his former colleague:

"[...] those who are in a position of leadership, especially those who think position is everything, should learn from Lukambo, be humble, and of course, dealing with several things at a time." (KKF4)



1.1.5 Role model: inspiring and mentoring others

Community members repeatedly portrayed Lukambo as a role model due to his different endeavours. He inspires them to follow in his footsteps and demonstrate the same commitment to their community:

"People are looking at him here in the camp, Lukambo is a role model within that particular location, he is among people, who people refer to as an example, 'you can be like, Lukambo, because you never seen Lukambo who is idle, Lukambo is either in the Centre where Vijana Twaweza or in this Centre to learn or in the Centre to teach.' So, [...] people are looking at him, some are referring to him as Mwalimu (teacher), So, [...] he becomes a role model." (KKF4)

This respondent particularly articulates that this role-modelling is appealing to youth, who are inspired to make healthy choices:

"Here in the camp, we have a very limited opportunities, most of the youths do not have any activity [...] and end up in drugs. Others may be on bad road to steal and cause chaos, but somebody like Luundo Lukambo, decided to take a very different direction, not only for him, but after him joining this diploma, he didn't say, now I have a job, I have a class to attend to, the community is not my business. Instead took it the opposite way that community is my business I have to change where I can, I don't have to wait for anyone to come and change [...] he's showing us, he can develop others, to impact the community positively." (KKF4)

This role-modelling is further expressed by a former classmate who reflects on when Lukambo was the Student Representative:

"I can say for my classmates, they even take him as a role model even if we're in the same level but the steps he always going ahead of us in term of leadership skills, So, that mean we follow his

footsteps [...]. They also see him as responsible and committed not only to his work but to helping others. This is how he is viewed and he can be chosen anywhere, because he has leadership in him as he is responsible, as well loyal, that is why he got that trust from the people." (KKF3)

This characteristic is later emphasised by the same respondent who directly benefited from Lukambo's mentoring when she was thinking of quitting her job and the Diploma programme. He gave her a reason to continue, asking her "If [you] had started, why should [you] stop?" She thankfully still works in that job today (KKF3).

Beyond his classmates, Lukambo serves as a role model for the larger community, particularly in encouraging children and youth to pursue their education:



"[...] you can see like if a child is that stubborn to go to school, mothers will [...] say, [...] 'Can you see Luundo is a great person and because of education and you don't want to go to school like he's now an example.' I can say he's the one motivating the people in the community."

– KKF2

This participant speaks from experience as thanks to Lukambo's mentorship, she pursued a competitive higher education scholarship opportunity:

"I can say he's a mentor to other kids [...] because I know he motivated me. [...] as I said that [...] I met him after my KCSE, I was so stressed and when I am not going to get the grade I want because I wanted WUSC, what is going to happen, I remember he used to comfort me and



finally I got it. First, I lost the chance that was 2020 and he kept on encouraging me until I got it. I finally got that chance. I can say he is a mentor.” (KKF1)

In the end, she pursued agricultural studies, inspired by VTC’s mission and role in the community:

“I’ve decided on my career because of him. Like now, I’m inspired in agricultural science. And before I didn’t know what I was exactly going to study. So, I can say like, he has helped me.” (KKF1)

Appearing as a role model and trustworthy leader for the community, Lukumbo is portrayed as a visionary who is committed and passionate in his diverse leadership roles. His actions in the community are not unnoticed by community members as they narrate the impact of his leadership.



Figure 4: Lukambo and a VTC member helping to clean the fishponds in VTC



3. A multidimensional impact: from economic to social development

Lukambo's transformative impact is unveiled through the voices of his community members. One member highlights the depth of Lukambo's impact by stating that without him, the community would not be the same as it is today:

"[...] because he is among them, he has the expertise and ability to bring together the team and see things from different perspectives. It made a community better than where he found it." (KKF4)

This section analyses how Lukambo's involvement in various projects benefited the community, including by improving living conditions.

1.2 Increases in sustainable and accessible food and household supply in the community

Community members unanimously recognised Lukambo's impact in terms of increasing sustainable food and household items access in Kakuma, through VTC:

"It does make a difference through the community-based organisation that he has started. As you know in Kakuma Refugee Camp, I can say, we are the only people who do fish farming, even though we compete in the crop farming and other agricultural activities [...]" (KKF5)

The impact is particularly salient in terms of reducing the distance between households and fish suppliers. Previously,

the only option for Kakuma residents to eat fish was to order from lake Turkana, which is over 200 km away, as noted by one participant (KKF5). Another participant, often involved in VTC herself, explains how this organisation addresses community food insecurity and contributes to closing agribusiness gaps:



"Some of his actions that lead to success in this community is that people who are here in the camp, they are given peas and rice so it is very hard for people to get vegetables because here in the camp this place, it is desert, normally, it is rare rain so, him he came up with a CBO which they farm, they grow crops to help people get green vegetables and also fish ponds where people in the community buy fish."

– KKF2

She further unveils that Lukambo's impact in the community is significant in providing a choice of healthy food items and addressing malnutrition:

"He has impacted people positively. For example, like when you eat fish, it helps people get proteins, [...] eat green vegetables, it helps people. [...] he did awareness in the community. He wants to come up with giving solution to malnutrition, [...] that cricket can help..." (KKF2)

Lukambo not only facilitated access to nutritious food, but also increased the affordability of soap and housing goods, meeting the needs of the community:

"He brings nets, he brings mattresses to the people, conduct games to the children to play. Yes. fishponds and also the agriculture. He also



involved in like the soap making, the CBO has come up with soap making [...], also because the UN now it is not distributing soap to the people, so, they came up with the solution to help people access soap and very cheap to the community [...].” (KKF2)

Parts of the earnings of the VTC are articulated as directly going back to the community, as the profit is used to provide community members with basic supplies (KKF1). Lukambo’s block leader discloses that these supplies are then distributed to vulnerable community members, such as elders and orphans:

“When I came to know this Luundo in my community as someone important, this is when maybe he came up with a certain project of helping people in the community like the old people, orphans. [...] So, we were given mosquito nets and food like wheat flour and this soap made here, so he came to me and asked me as chairlady and bring those items in my house to distribute them to the community because me I know all the people in the community, that’s when I met him.” (KKF2)

Furthermore, Lukambo’s organisation is reported as having financially improved the lives of many community members that were willing to get involved in agriculture:

“[...] in the area, people are now providing for themselves like they can get some little money to help themselves through agriculture. And through that agriculture, he mentored them, though it was not him alone as teamwork, but he did a lot of work like the greater part.” (KKF1)

Seeing the transformative effect that Lukambo and his work at VTC have, community members are encouraging their youth to follow in the footsteps of this Diploma graduate, and supporting education in the community:

“People are inspired to let their children go to school. They’re like, okay, let them study and I know one day they’re going to help me out. [...] they’re going to help the family as the way Luundo is helping their family and like, he is also helping himself like he can provide for himself.” (KKF1)

Therefore, Lukambo’s impact on his community through his leadership at VTC has transcended his community not only in material and financial terms, but also in terms of facilitating access to food, household supplies, and supporting education.

1.3 Empowering Youth: Sport and community engagement

Community members find that Lukambo has a central role in impacting the lives of youth (KKF2), particularly through his JWL Youth Sports Facilitator position. Lukambo was able to build a community and empower youths’ lives, as witnessed by a former JWL colleague who underlines how Lukambo served as an inspiration to students, imparting knowledge and skills:

“[...] under the youths and sports [facilitator], despite all the challenges, Lukambo was [...] a person who is ready to use his knowledge and experience to inspire others to come together and learn. [...] And this show that he is someone who can convince and inspire others to complete, he is a very optimistic person”. (KKF4)

Additionally, community activities in VTC, Lukambo empowered youth to avoid falling into harmful habits and take a different path driven by a will to serve the community, as cited by this respondent:

“Also, in that CBO of theirs, they have children, especially the youth, the young boys, [...] because here in the camp, we have a lot of challenges, peer pressure is one of the problems. If you see



your friend is doing this thing. Taking alcohol, smoking bang, so you feel like doing what your friend is doing. Since he came up with this CBO, he is now with most of the children who are just there, most of their time they spend there, in the place where their activities are, so they don't have that time of loitering in the community, seeing what other children are doing to make them to influence them [...]. So, that is one of his roles in the community.” (KKF2)

By mobilising youth in his organisation, Lukambo is able to empower them as they become independent and self-reliant leaders:



Ok Luundo is a role model to the community, because when he founded the Vijana Twaweza [Club], the Vijana word stand for youths. So, now it is the youth that are running that CBO [...].”

– KKF3

This impact is also compelling for young women, who are also actively engaged in this project and eventually are able to sustain themselves (KKF1).

Therefore, Lukambo’s involvement in the community, whether through his role in YSF course or VTC, directly benefits youth in shaping a brighter future for them, and encouraging healthy choices.

1.4 Opening new opportunities for the community: financial and professional development

Community members highlighted Lukambo’s role in prompting the

community’s financial and professional development. Lukambo is asserted to have uplifted community members by teaching agricultural skills (KKF1). This is also expressed by his relative who points how Lukambo taught him to rear fish:

“Like before I didn't know how to rear fish and do some agricultural activities but now wow! I am good [...] and I know all that is through the project that he defended.” (KKF5).

He adds that thanks to VTC, he is able to benefit financially from this knowledge:

“[...] I earned from it as one of my sources of income. [...] we get grants and funds, we get everything that we can get, that can help us in the CBO. So, I am among the people who do benefit from him.” (KKF5)

Beyond being an income-generating organisation, VTC financially empowers its members by building skills that are transferred to the community at large as often, VTC members are contracted to facilitate agricultural activities in various primary schools within Kakuma Camp:

“They were doing anything for the community [...] And later they created some employment opportunities for themselves, and they were paid. [...] the Vijana Twaweza thing, is really an important thing, because now, sometimes they will be asked to facilitate in the school because as Vijana, youths for agriculture and they are always paid. That means this is an achievement. That is what they normally do, facilitating at various schools and being paid by the organisations that hire them. That is a positive action from Glory, for it helps his volunteers to get some incentives for themselves.” (KKF3)

Thus, VTC appears as a source of financial and social development for the community, anchored in Lukambo’s contribution as a founder and leader of the organisation.



Moreover, Lukambo is identified as having facilitated professional opportunities by referring some of his students to organisations he worked with:

"[...] when maybe the opportunities came in, like maybe on daily basis, like a casual work coming from those former organisations which he worked with, he always sends that information to the Centre, so that those students who doesn't have anything to do can apply. A very good example is AEC research. like he recommends students [...] we connect with him to make sure these students who do not have anything to do get those kinds of opportunities, these particular activities within the AEC Kenya department of research. [...] most of them get a job through Lukambo [...]. [...] he affected our lives in such a way that he's acting as a bridge. And he always

connects our students to all the opportunities he knows." (KKF4)

Therefore, Lukambo impacts his community by offering various forms of professional development, whether through his CBO in which members also benefit from opportunities engendered by their work in the organisation, or by serving as a connector between students and professional opportunities. Thus, besides financially and professionally empowering VTC members and his students, Lukambo has impacted the community by facilitating sustainable access to food and household item in the camp, and mobilising and inspiring youth to pursue their education and make healthy choices.



Figure 5: Lukambo providing guidance to a VTC member standing near the small fishponds



Key points

- Community members depict Lukambo as a visionary and trustworthy leader, who is passionate and committed to the community.
- Lukambo serves as a role model for many in the community, particularly in encouraging youth to pursue their education and further professional opportunities.
- Community members unanimously recognise Lukambo's impact in terms of increasing sustainable access to food and household items through Vijana Twaweza Club - the first fish farm in Kakuma - which he co-founded during his Diploma programme studies.
- Through his Youth Sports Facilitator position and VTC leadership, Lukambo has contributed to preventing children from turning to substance abuse and other forms of harmful behaviour, encouraging them to make healthy life choices instead.
- Community members mention benefitting financially and professionally from Lukambo's various leadership roles, whether through opportunities at VTC, or by referrals.



4. Authors and contributors

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