



Jesuit Worldwide Learning

Higher Education at the Margins

Research Report

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Higher Education Nurturing Agents of Change at the Margins

Meet Innocent: a business leader for others

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 fifth case study, we introduce the story of Innocent, a business leader bringing socioeconomic impact through a soap company. By analysing the voices of his community members, this report demonstrates how Innocent's entrepreneurial skills enabled to financially empower his community, encouraged others to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams and contributed in mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic, training community members to make soap products and mobilising resources to support Kakuma and host community residents during these challenging times.

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1. Introduction

Innocent is a well-known entrepreneur in Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camp. He is the Founder and CEO of GLAP Enterprises, a business that engages in the large-scale production of soap products. In 2015, Innocent joined the Diploma in Liberal Studies and majored in Business, hoping to gain the knowledge and skills to grow his business. After graduating in 2019, Innocent was able to expand his business and more importantly, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, step up production of

these products to meet the needs of communities in Kakuma Refugee Camp and throughout Turkana West. Through the voices of the community,¹ this report tells the story of Innocent, a businessman seeking to improve the sanitary conditions of Kakuma while also creating social and financial opportunities for camp residents. This case study unveils how through his commitment, leadership and entrepreneurship characteristics, Innocent was able to generate social and economic impact in his community.



Figure 1: Innocent in his soap shop

¹ KKB1: Close family member; KKB2: GLAP leadership team colleague; KKB3: colleague and friend; KKB4: a business partner; KKB5: local pastor



1. Personal characteristics: a business leader committed to his community

1.1 Committed

Innocent is well known for being a hard-working person, particularly as regards his business. A close family member attests that Innocent does not make excuses not to execute his plans on a daily basis as he strives to supply his product – rain or shine – and inspires others to do the same:

"I learn from him hard work, yes hard work. When he came here, I was indoors all the time due to the fear of the hot sun. I was not willing to go outside, then I started to see that life will not improve if I'm always indoors and I started to follow him, we then sold together. [...], then I started to see Kakuma is okay, the sun was no longer a problem to me but before I use to tell him you go alone, I cannot tolerate this sun in Kakuma and now I can walk and hawk seriously." (KKB1)

In addition to being hard-working, Innocent is seen as a committed person, as expressed by this respondent:

"He is a resilient man and he's a man of advice, he doesn't give up. So, for me, I see Innocent has gone far. He is a man who would give you advice and ask you not to give up in whatever endeavours you are in, so that's the most important thing I've learned from him." (KKB4)

This commitment and resilience is stressed by another participant who witnessed Innocent's personal development:

"Even [...] Innocent was having some challenges at the beginning but he didn't give up instead he continued, and I learn that from him [...]" (KKB3)

This development appears to have begun around the time of this Diploma studies, as expressed by this participant:

"Before [the Diploma] he was not that very much committed to community activities, but then after he graduated, [...] he's producing some soaps, you know, training community members on how to make soaps, [...] so he's taking up great and incredible leadership roles in the community." (KKB4)

1.2 Leading by example

Community members describe Innocent as a leader embracing the philosophy of leading by example, as a humble and skilled business leader and role model in the community.

1.1.1 Humble

Innocent is portrayed as embracing humility as part of his values, despite his success as a business leader in the community. The local pastor illustrates this point, highlighting how Innocent does not shy away from hard work, investing himself in various tasks as much as his staff:

"Normally Innocent if you see him in the community, you can never think if he is the one having this company called GLAP and also even when you go to the GLAP, some staff can be challenged because [...] he is the one doing his own work. So, to recognise him, you need to know him very well. Even some people, [...] they can come to knock on the door of the office of Innocent began to ask who is Innocent but when he says I am the one, people become surprised. He works so much, so much and any work he can do. "

One of Innocent's employees confirms this description, stating that Innocent's



humility inspires others to embrace the same values:



“So even my colleagues, I can say that this one has affected them because some of them, before there were not humble but now, they are humble because some of the persons they can say: ‘So, me I'm a boss I cannot touch these things or that one but Innocent, he can touch everything and he can work to agree even to do anything, so [...] what about us?’”

– KKB2

His humility and commitment are transmitted to those around him, such as colleagues:

“In the factory, [...] many persons have become humble and they have become hard workers because of what they have seen to Innocent.” (KKB2)

1.1.2 Role model

Innocent is depicted as an inspiring figure – a role model for the community. A close relative explained how she was able to learn resilience and perseverance from him, as Innocent inspired her to never give up:

“I learn that failure is not the option, that if I failed today, I will get it tomorrow, yeah because when I see today, I failed and quit I see like life will not go well but I came to realise if I give it a try once more, I see some improvement [...]. If I work hard enough tomorrow, I will get it that I want.”. (KKB1)

Given his professional success, community members attest that his behaviour inspires others to pursue their

dreams (KKB2, KKB1). One participant pointed out that:

“[...] the behaviour of Innocent contributes to the community. Innocent now in his behaviour I can say that it has become an example to the other person. [...] There are many people who want to be like Innocent because of his behaviour, because of many things he did so maybe they can say that even ‘I will join that class, even me I will starting my business of this soap.’” (KKB2)

This inspiration is particularly relevant to youth, now ambitious to venture into the soap business:

“His behaviour is good because some youth learned through him the way he acts and through his business, there are some who started to run their own business and ask themselves like how can they get there like Innocent is and they want to be like him. Some they started business and learn how to make soap and some they used to sell the soap too.” (KKB3)

His success and role modelling in the community leads many new entrepreneurial members to seek his advice and financial support. A close family member illustrates that:

“[...] They consult him when they want to start up something. Like for example those people in that bar they came to him and consult him that they have found a space over there but we don't have enough money to start a bar that they have a ready planned, and they maybe need some money to buy a solar and some speakers or radio, they will always come to Innocent to borrow that money [...]. I have seen many come here to explain their problems Innocent and they all the time get helped, yeah.” KKB1

Innocent's professional growth is even highlighted by community leaders as exemplary, during the community or block leader's meetings (KKB5). His name is frequently referred to as someone who has



endured a hard life and yet persevered (KKB3, KKB5):

"They used to give him as an example because in the community there are so many different people who are living a hard life, Yeah, they are drunkards, and many different people who have all different sorts of lives. Yeah, when they go to resolve the problem like as a block leader, they used to solve the problem in the community. Sometimes they use Innocent as an example in this community all times. Yeah, they use him as an example here of transformation, that one can change his life like Innocent." (KKB5)

The community engagement and leadership which Innocent developed during his Diploma studies made him a role model for his community, especially for youth, and particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic:

"So, let me say he has exponentially changed [after the Diploma] in terms of leadership, community engagement, and all these things. So, he's, you know, has become a role model for many young people in the camp. You know, especially when it comes to identifying community problems and solving them. So, [...] when COVID-19 started and he came up with this incredible initiative whereby he was able to supply basic COVID-19 protective materials, could be, you know, soaps, sanitisers, and all these things, so and say he's doing an incredible job, so a lot has changed." (KKB4)

1.1.3 Communicative

One of Innocent's characteristics highlighted by participants is his ability to communicate effectively with anyone, regardless of their nationality, and in various languages (KKB5). The pastor mentions that:

"I can say he is a good communicator because of these languages, and I can see many people they say Innocent can talk with the Sudanese

people or the Somali people, so he's a good communicator." (KKB5)

This communication skill translates into a strong financial literacy for his business colleagues, who asserted Innocent taught him not only financial management skills but also speaking skills:

"So, I have learnt a lot through Innocent, the first things I have learnt from Innocent is how to manage money and also how I can stand in front of adults and teach them how to make soap or other things, and also before I was not able to speak English the way I am now. So, through Innocent because he was used to having many visitors and sometimes [he] sa[id] that 'today I will not to speak anything, you are the one who will explain anything.' Yeah, in first he was making me struggle but now I'm trying." (KKB2)

1.1.4 Creative and problem-solver

Innocent's entrepreneurial skills are also rooted in robust problem-solving and creative thinking skills. This participant mentions that:



"He is also somebody who has been [...] solving community issues in a more innovative way rather than just looking at problems and complaining. So, he is somebody who sees problems and tries to come up with innovative solutions to solve them."

– KKB4

Furthermore, this participant points to the Diploma programme's role in expanding Innocent's mindset, his awareness of local community issues, and determination to identify solutions:



"We first need to appreciate the fact that, [the Diploma] has opened up his mindset and maybe the way he sees things in the community, the way he sees problems, I mean, he doesn't just see problems as a problem but [as] an opportunity [...] for not only himself, but for many young people in the camp, so it is a great change in terms of problem-solving, the way he sees things and approaches problems [...]so it doesn't only see problems and complain, but he tries to come up with the innovative solutions."(KKB4)

Innocent has been working on a new project, further demonstrating his innovative thinking in addressing local community issues. Having identified the problem of plastic waste in the camp, he is working on ways to upcycle plastic waste by, for example, making chairs out of those objects:

"Now he is starting a new project of making plastic chairs, yeah, he is in the starting stage, [...] that is what he is now planning to start in the near future. (KKB1)

Thus, Innocent is viewed as having made a significant difference in his community and Kakuma's daily necessities market by sharing his entrepreneurial knowledge and experience, and encouraging others to start their business venture. This was made possible due to his highly- developed problem-solving skills, as well as the resilience, commitment, and humility which characterise him. The next section reflects the voices of Innocent's community members regarding his financial and social impact on the community.



Figure 2: Innocent and his business partner, in front of GLAP enterprise



2. A social and economic impact

Innocent is perceived as a servant of the community. Whether by providing financial advice or support, professional opportunities, or supplying Covid-19 materials during the pandemic, Innocent is described as a key resource in the community.

2.1 Providing financial advice and support

Community members stressed Innocent's financial impact on the community through his business, GLAP.

It is recognised that employment opportunities created by GLAP have improved many lives (KKB1, KKB2). A close family member attests to this, saying that:



"Innocent is helping the community by providing them with jobs at the production site. Some are selling and others are producing soaps, some bringing water and all of them are at least earning a small income."

– KKB1

One of his neighbour recalls how he benefited from Innocent's support:

"One time he called me when he was getting a good market. So, he gave me an opportunity to work for two weeks, in making soap on his site, and it was good for me because I get something to help my family." (KKB3)

She further added that this socioeconomic impact is also repercussions on the youth in the community :

"It is special because people want to learn his behaviour [...] because it is good. I see there are some changes in that age bracket in this community." (KKB3)

This is also relevant in terms of increasing access to basic necessities. One of his colleagues relates how Innocent is making a significant difference in Kakuma by producing affordable soap for refugees, avoiding the import of more expensive soaps from Nairobi. (KKB2)

The pastor mentions that Innocent supplied power to the community, for a time:

"Innocent has a generator that gives the power to the people here in the community. So now it's like this year 2021 he was the one who give the power to many people here but now because Innocent have more jobs, the other people buy a generator. [...] let us buy our own generator so we can help the people." (KKB5)

This participant also emphasised how, through the knowledge and skills acquired during the Diploma programme, GLAP became successful to the extent of expanding business in the Burundi market space of Kakuma, and developing housing projects:

"So, I can say that this diploma has benefited him because before Innocent, he was not having a land as you have seen, yeah, he was having this GLAP but it was he was in a smaller place but now we have a big place to the market as use you saw so means that now there is a big improvement we have, there we have a machine/generator where we do supply power to the soap production site and to the shop there in Burundi market [...]. Also, he has some building house there [to rent]" (KKB2)



Besides providing the community with jobs and access to more affordable daily necessities products, Innocent is well-known for being key in motivating his community to break from their reliance on aid from international organisations, and empowering them to realise their dreams:

"[...] the other person what they can learn to Innocent, there is one word, Innocent use to speak every time, say that 'we know that we are refugees and we depend on UNHCR every time means that everything we do receive food from ration and the Bamba Chakula but that one will not help the way we need, so it's better to have a small work or everything which can make you busy so that you can get more money and a part of that you will stay safe every time and we will

get what you want every time and we will change the food, you will buy the clothes and you will do the beautiful house."(KKB2)

Thus, Innocent's impact is two-dimensional in terms of financially lifting the community. Apart from providing essential household items at affordable costs, he also provides the community with employment and training opportunities, "just to increase, their livelihood" according to one participant (KKB4). This contributes to the financial empowerment of his community.



Figure 3: Innocent and his colleagues in the GLAP soap shop



2.2 Providing WASH supply during Covid

As the only soap-maker in Kakuma, GLAP was highlighted as a key actor in mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic. Innocent took the lead in supplying his soap and disinfectant products to many humanitarian organisations, community-based organisations, and schools within the camp, to meet urgent needs:

"If he was not the only local supplier we had back during that time, so you can imagine like COVID has already started in the camp and you wait for supplies from Nairobi or the nearest town so it would have been difficult, but if you have local manufacturers around the area like those of Innocent, I think it eases the work, the supply chain and items the communities can get these things very easily and at an affordable price. That's the most important thing." (KKB4)

He trained many community members to join him in fighting COVID-19 by producing WASH products including different forms of soap and disinfectants. This community member remembers his actions as exemplary:

"During COVID-19, mainly organisations, especially international organisations many of them reduced their staffing capacity and we had very little supply of protective equipment in the camp but Innocent stepped up and mobilise community members, he trained them, on how to produce these needed items and materials so which was an incredible job so he helped the community very much and he was able to address some of these, challenges related to COVID-19 we had organisations supplied with soap, liquid soap, sanitisers, and so on. So, I think for me that was a big initiative, which was commended, and applauded by the entire Community." (KKB4)

His is recognised for his work through GLAP, but also as a leader who mobilised

donors and raised funds to alleviate the challenges faced by Kakuma residents, particularly the most vulnerable populations, as a result of the pandemic. This respondent underlines:

"[...] from 2020 where this pandemic of Corona has started, he was trying [...] to tell the donors so that they can help the person through Innocent because he was the one who informed them that, here in the camp you know the person who is very squeezed and there is no other way where you can say that the social distancing or what, because we have the same tap, we have the same toilet, we have the same hospital and the other things we share so he was trying to refer that suggestion to the donors where some of the donors they have given some money which had helped the community [...] and he was giving the soap freely to the beneficiary, especially to the most vulnerable."(KKB2)

2.3 Providing professional opportunities for everyone, including marginalised communities

His commitment to the community did not stop with efforts related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Innocent is reported to be a man of service to the community as revealed by his willingness to help everyone, regardless of their background. His colleagues mention how Innocent helps vulnerable people, including orphans and single mothers, and members of the host community (KKB2, KKB3). This is further emphasised by the pastor who states that Innocent serves not only people from his church community, but "also South Sudanese people, even the Turkana people. So, [he] helps everybody." (KKB5)



Notably, Innocent inspired and trained blind people to produce soap. A family member shares her astonishment:

"There are people who are blind. [...] I was even surprised when he called them to come to make soap here, and they are people who don't see, and they know how to make soap. [...] I was shocked that they did it, I was like how did he train them, how did he do it! He trains them by showing them the chemicals by name [...] and he would direct them and wow!!! You will be surprised, yes, they make it well and they are blind people." (KKB1)

Innocent trains members of vulnerable populations as a long-term solution to sustaining their livelihoods and improving the community's living standards. This participant elaborates:



"His role here in the community, sometimes he helps the widows, orphans, and the disabled persons. He does help them sometimes by giving them soaps, and some he trains them for free, all that to improve their lives. He trains them how to read and also how to make soap [...] and how to sell it, so that they will know how to make it and also to sell it- [...] He shows them how to pack and he does tell them you [...] can pack in the small label bottles and hawk with it from door to door and with that training you find some of them get a good income stream."

– KKB1

One of his senior staff members highlights that these mentorship efforts empower individuals:

"He can mentor them until they can go to continue to make the support themselves." (KKB2).

Thus, Innocent works to ensure no one is left behind by providing everyone, including the most vulnerable and marginalised individuals, with employment and training opportunities.



Key points

- Innocent is portrayed as a humble, committed and creative business leader, possessing strong communication and problem-solving skills.
- Community members highlight that the knowledge and skills acquired during the Diploma in Liberal Studies enabled Innocent to develop his entrepreneurial mind, as well as other core characteristics, which led to the success of his business.
- Innocent is viewed as a role model and mentor for the community, encouraging others to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams.
- Innocent has tackled critical issues affecting Kakuma Camp's community by increasing access to affordable soap products, and supplying electricity by sharing his generator.
- Innocent and his soap-making business played a crucial role in mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic, training community members to make soap products and mobilising resources to support Kakuma and host community residents during these challenging times.
- Community members highlight Innocent's willingness to support everyone (including members of the host community, orphans, single mothers, and persons with disabilities) by providing them with employment and mentorship opportunities, which they highlight as financially empowering for the community.



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