



PLATFORM FOR LABOUR ACTION

Ensuring Democracy & Social Justice in the World of Work

**ADVANCING SAFE AND
INCLUSIVE LABOUR MIGRATION
PROGRAM IN UGANDA**

IMPACT BRIEF

www.pla-uganda.org



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Founded in 2000, Platform for Labour Action (PLA) is a Ugandan non-governmental organization dedicated to protecting the rights of vulnerable workers. Guided by a professional team and a multidisciplinary board, PLA works toward a society where economic rights and social justice are upheld. Its core mission is to empower individuals and communities to claim their rights.

Since 2017, PLA has focused on ensuring that labor migration is a path to opportunity, not vulnerability, for thousands of Ugandans seeking work both domestically and abroad. Migrants, particularly women and youth, often face exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and limited access to justice.

This brief highlights the impact of PLA's safe labor migration program, which uses a combination of legal aid, advocacy, awareness campaigns, and capacity building for stakeholders like law enforcement and recruitment agencies. By fostering strategic partnerships with government agencies and international organizations, PLA has enhanced coordination and improved access to justice for migrant workers. These efforts directly contribute to Sustainable Development Goals 8.7 and 8.8, which aim to eradicate forced labor and protect the rights of all workers, including migrants.

Our Core Activities

Empowering Internal Migrants;

Educate youth and communities on labour rights, trafficking in persons, modern day slavery and safe migration; Provide legal aid to exploited workers and advocate for inclusive policies that extend social protection.

Promoting Safe Migration Abroad;

Equip prospective migrant workers and families with knowledge on rights, contracts, and risks; Offer legal aid and psychosocial support to migrants in distress; Support returnees with employment, skilling and entrepreneurship training.

Strengthening National Coordination:

Participate in the National Coordination Mechanism on Migration; Contribute to the National Task Force on Trafficking in Persons and Shape national responses to migration and trafficking.

2.0 OUR IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

1

Community Awareness

20,429 individuals reached across districts **23** radio sessions conducted; Increased demand for safe migration info from PLA & local leaders

2

Youth Engagement

7,475 youth from **22** institutions (universities & vocational schools) Educated on safe migration pathways, risks, and reporting abuse

3

Access to Justice

386 migrant workers supported **70%** of exploitation cases resolved through legal aid Arrests of illegal recruiters & recovery of documents/dues

4

Pre-departure Training

2,484 female migrant workers trained Covered contracts, job skills, cultural adaptation, rights; Emergency contact stickers provided for embassies & ministries

5

Law Enforcement Training

102 officers & duty bearers trained; Traffickers changed routes due to disrupted networks

6

Reintegration Support;

189 returnees received skills & entrepreneurship training; **131** supported through UN livelihood programs; **76%** now engaged in agricultural enterprises

2.1 Community campaigns and dialogue on safe labour migration have reached thousands of vulnerable women, youth prospective migrants, migrant workers and their families between 2017 and 2024. 20,429 individuals were directly equipped with information on safe, orderly and productive migration. This has been across the districts of Iganga, Kaliro, Bugiri, Mbale, Tororo, Busia in Eastern region; Dokolo, Amolatar, Lira, in Northern region and Kampala, Wakiso, Mpigi in Central region in Uganda. As a result, the number of persons seeking for information on safe migration from PLA, community liaison officers and local council leaders in the districts of operation increased.



Community members of Nambale- Iganga District gathered for Awareness Session on safe labour migration facilitated by PLA staff Lydia Bwiite, Manager Rights Social Protection and Accountability

In addition Twenty three (23) community awareness sessions on safe migration options to work abroad, schemes being used by the illegal recruiters to lure young people and women were held using community radio mega platforms in Kampala covering Bwaise community radio, Nsambya community radio, Katwe vendor's radio, Nakawa vendors voice, Kawempe radio Lugala FM in Kampala; on Tano Tano FM and Voice of Busia in Busia district, Lira Main Market voice in Lira.



A Dialogue with community leaders on their role in facilitating safe labour migration at Eureka Palace Hotel Ntinda in Kampala

2.2 Enhanced Youth awareness on safe Labour migration; A total of 7,475 young people (3,531 females and 3,944 male) from 22 institutions. These included universities, technical and vocational institutes, and high schools were reached through an awareness initiative that promoted safe labour migration. These youth, identified as potential migrants vulnerable to illegal recruitment and exploitative labour conditions, were equipped with critical information as part of the pre-decision-making process. The sessions focused on: Recognizing safe migration pathways; Understanding the risks of irregular migration and Knowing how to report exploitation and abuse. This proactive approach enabled young people to make informed decisions about migration, reducing their vulnerability and enhancing their ability to seek dignified and lawful employment abroad.

2.3 Migrant workers accessed justice and support: 70% of vulnerable migrant workers who reported at risk or experiencing exploitation were supported to prevent or stop the exploitation through legal representation, awareness raising and follow ups. **386 migrant workers(263 female 123 male have accessed justice and support.** These were provided with legal assistance and through working with authorities in arresting illegal recruiters including those from the districts Busia, Tororo and Lira recovered their dues and personal documents from illegal recruiters and accessed legal assistance and prosecution . **Examples include stories of victims as these two below;**

'When I got to Uganda, I was taken to Mulago and the doctor said that the backbone was broken. The agent called my auntie and threatened her after knowing that I came back. My mother reported my case to the Trafficking in Persons Office, but no assistance yet. The officer told her that she had called the agent to talk to him but had not yet gotten a reply'. I was informed about Platform for Labour Action(PLA) and they started following up my case with the trafficking in persons office. (VIT, Oman)

'I made a statement to the police. Then when I came to follow up on my case, the lady handling my case called the lady who trafficked me and they started laughing on the phone and chatting as friends. I realised these people were not going to help me since they were friends with the traffickers. Police later captured the trafficker and released her that same day. My husband was spending money to follow up the case but nothing was succeeding. We lost interest in the case' I was informed about Platform for Labour Action(PLA) and they started following up my case and the man was arrested. (VIT, Kuwait)

2.4 Female Migrant Workers equipped with knowledge for safer and more informed employment abroad;

Through a targeted orientation initiative, 2,484 female migrant workers preparing for employment abroad were equipped with critical knowledge and tools to navigate their migration journey safely and confidently. These women, recruited through registered and licensed companies, received comprehensive guidance on: Understanding employment contracts and key clauses to look out for; Job competencies and workplace expectations; Cultural adaptation and coping mechanisms; their rights and responsibilities as migrant workers and mechanisms for redress in case of disputes or exploitation.

To enhance their safety and access to support, each participant received a passport sticker with emergency contact details for the Uganda Embassy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,

the Labour Liaison Officer, and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development in Uganda. This simple but powerful tool ensured that help was just a call away in moments of distress. This intervention not only strengthened the resilience and preparedness of Uganda's female migrant workforce but also contributed to reducing vulnerability to exploitation and abuse, fostering safer labour migration pathways.

In addition 79 (39 male 40 female) representatives from Recruitment Companies registered and licensed to recruit and place Uganda Migrant Workers abroad were trained on Ethical recruitment processes under the law, role of the different stakeholders in labour migration(police, local leaders, NGOs, RDCs,), understanding the interconnections between labour migration and trafficking in persons, the role and responsibilities of recruitment agencies to prevent recruitment of Ugandan migrant workers into exploitative labour.

25 Contribution to Strengthened Anti-Trafficking Efforts:

Through targeted capacity-building efforts, a fully operational Human Trafficking Desk was established at Busia Central Police Station to respond to and manage cases of trafficking in persons. Additionally, a joint anti-trafficking patrol task force between Uganda and Kenya was launched at the Busia border. This task force conducted coordinated operations that led to the interception of individuals at risk of trafficking. Trained law enforcement officers also led community sensitization efforts, which resulted in increased public awareness and vigilance around trafficking issues. District reports indicated that traffickers altered their routes—from Busia and Tororo to Rwaka in Mbale—demonstrating the disruption of trafficking networks due to heightened enforcement and community engagement.

These outcomes were achieved following the training of 102 law enforcement officers and duty bearers (23 females, 79 male) on human trafficking and safe labour migration. The training covered:

- The concept and legal framework of trafficking in persons in Uganda

- The link between corruption and trafficking
- The impact of trafficking on victims and society
- Investigation procedures and prosecution strategies
- Victim protection during repatriation, reintegration, and rehabilitation
- The role of law enforcement in combating trafficking

This intervention significantly strengthened institutional response mechanisms and catalyzed community-level action, contributing to a safer and more informed border region.

2.5.1 Awareness raising intervention at border points: Pull-up banners were developed and printed in English, Luganda, and Swahili, featuring key messages on safe labour migration, common trafficking schemes, reporting channels, and public warnings about the realities of human trafficking. These banners were strategically placed at both the Ugandan and Kenyan border points of Busia and Malaba. They served as an accessible and informative medium for travelers ; particularly those departing or arriving in Uganda; raising awareness about the risks of trafficking and promoting safe migration practices.

2.6 Reintegration and Livelihood Support for Returnee Migrant Workers; A total of 189 returnee migrant workers (157 female, 32 male) have begun rebuilding their lives through targeted skilling, employment, and entrepreneurship training. As a result, 26 returnees have successfully accessed gainful employment opportunities, marking a significant step toward sustainable reintegration.

These comprise returnees from Gulf countries—including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Oman where they had been working as domestic workers, cleaners, and security guards, hail from the districts of Kampala, Wakiso, and Mukono.

In collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), returnees received training in agribusiness and investment, leading to the launch of diverse agricultural enterprises. Today, 76% of these returnees are actively

engaged in ventures such as piggery, mushroom farming, juice production, poultry, goat and rabbit rearing, and crop cultivation (bananas, watermelon, tomatoes, and more).

Notably, these initiatives incorporated climate-resilient practices, including the use of animal urine as fertilizer and repurposing waste for cooking fuel—reducing reliance on firewood. Participants also received ongoing business coaching and support to help actualize and sustain their agribusiness ideas.

This reintegration model not only restores dignity and economic independence to returnee migrant workers but also contributes to local development, food security, and climate resilience.

2.7 Engaging in National Coordination Platforms and strategic partnerships with international agencies; Key stakeholders' dialogues for key players in the labor migration chain convened as platform for discussing issues affecting safe labour migration program leading to commitment by development agencies such as IOM to secure funds in support of the review and strengthening of the pre-departure orientation training for migrant workers Stakeholders include the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Office of Director of Public Protection, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry for Presidency, Uganda Human Rights Commission, Uganda Law Reforms Commission, Labour unions, Representatives from Uganda Association of External recruitment Agencies, Civil Society Organisations working to support migrant workers, members of the National Task force on trafficking in person, development partners such as International Organisation for Migration, International Labour Organisation and Migrant Rights Organisation and Global Alliance against Trafficking in Women (GAATWA)

Systematic, legal and policy actions being taken by the government of Uganda through the Ministry Of Gender, Labour and Social Development have been supported by other development partners which has streamlined and enhanced the protection of migrant workers' rights, pre-departure orientation curriculum regulations on externalisation of labour adopted among others



Snapshot of Stories from beneficiaries

Below: is the social media communication from Ehguloiti Alex, a OC station officer at Malaba Police station appreciating PLA for the knowledge gained from being trained on trafficking in persons which enabled him intercept on young lady who was being trafficked to Kenya from Bushenyi district in Uganda, just 2 days after the training. The officer had previously shared that he had been ignorant about the crime of trafficking in persons and this could have let most perpetrators reported to his office go scort free and had promised that with the knowledge gained, he was going to ensure he doe not commit such a mistake again.



A one Ssali Patrick who attended one of the community awareness sessions in Kisenyi in Kampala district He shared with PLA that that he had been recruited by a travel agency to go and work in Dubai, however, the person at the travel agency had informed him that together with other prospective workers that had been connected to work in Dubai were going to use the road transport from Uganda to Kenya in order to cut the travel costs. After attending the awareness session that was conducted by PLA such a scheme used by traffickers had been talked about by the PLA staff and he realized he was going to be trafficked. He immediately cancelled the journey because he also found out that travel agencies are not allowed to export labour outside Uganda. He appreciates PLA for reaching out to the community with awareness messages on human trafficking since the messages will save a lot of community members from being trafficked.

3.0 SNAPSHOT OF PROGRAM IMAGES ON OUR INTERVENTIONS



http://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1451230/law-enforcement-officers-trained-combating-human-trafficking



Above: The simplified version of the Prevention of trafficking in persons Act 2017 that is being used by the law enforcement officers and community volunteers in raising awareness on the law against human trafficking in Uganda



Above: The immigration officers from Busia and Malaba Border points posing for a photo after receiving a burner on 'what you need to know before going abroad from PLA staff'

Some Media Links about PLA's work; On 9th April 2017, the District Police Commander for Tororo district and his investigation team that was part of the trained intercepted four girls who were being trafficked across the border to Kenya.

4.0 KEY LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCALING UP INTERVENTIONS

4.1 Prevention through Information

Dissemination Works: Providing prospective migrants and their families with accurate information before they decide to move leads to safer and more informed choices. This approach is most effective when it is community-based, culturally tailored, and delivered early, before recruitment processes begin. Because people will always be on the move, it is critical that they have the right information. **To scale this lesson, there's a need to:**

- Expand awareness campaigns to rural and high-outmigration districts.
- Leverage digital platforms like radio, social media, and mobile apps to reach wider audiences cost-effectively and to profile available job opportunities. This will help young people make informed decisions about migration.

Additional Investment to Scale: This requires both financial resources to run large-scale digital campaigns and human resources to manage content creation, outreach, and community engagement.

4.2 Pre-departure Training Strengthens Preparedness

Preparedness: Orientation training equips migrants with practical knowledge about their rights, contracts, and conditions in the destination country. Continuous follow-up—before departure, during migration, and after return—creates stronger protection outcomes than one-off sessions. **To scale this lesson, it is crucial to:**

- Advocate for mandatory, standardized pre-departure training to be integrated into the government's labor migration framework.
- Partner with recruitment agencies and local governments to mainstream these sessions.

Additional Investment to Scale: This requires financial support for developing training materials, training trainers, and establishing formal partnerships to institutionalize the program.

4.3 Legal and Psychosocial Support Are Critical Safety Nets

Many migrants in distress face significant barriers to accessing justice both abroad and at home. Providing integrated legal aid and psychosocial counseling not only resolves individual cases but also generates systemic evidence for broader advocacy efforts. **To scale this lesson, there's a need to:**

- Strengthen current regional legal aid hubs and expand partnerships with pro-bono lawyers and development partners for support. This will enable vulnerable migrants to be protected and realize their rights.
- Establish a centralized database to track migration case trends and inform national and regional policy.

Additional Investment: Scaling this requires substantial financial investment to establish new legal aid hubs, maintain a centralized database, and hire additional legal and psychosocial staff.

4.4 Policy Advocacy Drives Structural Change

Engaging in legal and policy reform is essential for addressing gaps in migration governance. Linking evidence from the lived experiences of migrants with high-level policy processes makes advocacy more persuasive and impactful. **To scale this lesson, it is urgent to:**

- Push for bilateral labor agreements that prioritize migrant rights.
- Promote the ratification and domestication of international conventions such as the ILO C189 and the UN Migrant Workers Convention.

Additional Investment: This requires financial and human resources to support sustained advocacy campaigns, conduct policy research, and engage with government bodies and regional partners.

4.5 Multi-Stakeholder coordination is key; Effective interventions require collaboration with various partners, including government ministries, law enforcement, foreign missions, civil society organizations (CSOs), and community structures. Labor migration cannot be addressed in isolation; cross-sectoral coordination is essential. Training community volunteers, local leaders, and law enforcement officers enables them to perform their roles and strengthens their accountability in handling trafficking cases. **To scale this lesson, there's a need to:**

- Strengthen existing networks and create new ones to improve cross-sectoral coordination.
- Secure resources to support the training and capacity-building of local partners and government officials.
- Collaborate across the region, continent and global levels

Additional Investment: This requires investment in building a dedicated team for partnership management and coordination, along with financial resources for joint training programs and networking with organisations such as Migrant Rights Organisation and Global Alliance against Trafficking in Women (GAATWA).

4.6 Support for Reintegration and Knowledge Sharing; Reintegration of Returnees: Resources are needed to create reintegration programs that include livelihoods, psychosocial support, and skills training so that returnees can utilize their remittances to undertake viable ventures and are prevented from falling back into cycles of vulnerability; Research and Knowledge Sharing: Documenting and publishing experiences and best practices is essential to inform national and regional dialogues. This will also help to position the organization as a knowledge hub on labor migration

Additional Investment: This requires financial support to design and implement these programs, as well as investment in a research and communications team to document lessons learned and publish findings.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The above work of Platform for Labour Action (PLA) demonstrates that a multi-faceted approach combining awareness, legal support, policy advocacy, and multi-stakeholder collaboration is crucial for ensuring safe and dignified labor migration in Uganda and further contribute to prevention of trafficking in persons. The organization's interventions have had a tangible impact, from equipping over 20,000 individuals with information on safe migration to helping vulnerable migrants access justice and support. The establishment of an anti-trafficking desk at a key border point and the successful reintegration of returnees into sustainable livelihoods further highlight the effectiveness of these efforts. To build on these successes and address the persistent challenges migrants face, scaling up these proven interventions through strategic investments in human and financial resources is essential. Continued support will not only protect more vulnerable individuals but also contribute to systemic change, ultimately making migration a pathway to opportunity rather than vulnerability for all Ugandans.

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