

The Paintmakers of Lira

An Abstract of the Thesis by

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Abstract

In Northern Uganda, government institutions struggle to provide incomes for young adults to live and support their families. This study examines “The Paintmakers of Lira” (“Paintmakers”), a private development initiative that uses participatory action research and the framework of an entrepreneurial artisanal paint-making business to teach work and vocational skills through informal, experiential learning. The research problem is to assess the effectiveness and usefulness of the methods and strategies used to implement the project. The data shows that participants believed they gained useful skills and experience despite the difficulties of designing and implementing a collaborative project in an underdeveloped, post-conflict society. Despite its limitations, this study offers rare insights into the practical problems of an increasingly common form of international social work/development work, and it provides useful guidance for future practitioners of small, informal social work projects.

Keywords: Social work, social development, participatory action research, entrepreneurship, empowerment