

PHIONAH AGABA

ENTREPRENEUR UGANDA

During the COVID-19 lockdown, Pheona Agaba, of Mbarara City, was keen to keep busy and to help other women earn desperately needed income. She was in contact with a small group of widows, single mothers and girls who were struggling to make a living selling crafts.

She began using her smartphone to research the internet for ideas to help the group to increase their earnings. But browsing was expensive. She quickly ran out of data and could not afford to top-up.

“We heard about the free internet and training at Mbarara City Library, so we went to investigate. It was perfect — but most of our group had never used a computer before,” says Phionah.

The librarian, who had completed a training-of-trainers programme organized by EIFL, Maendeleo Foundation and the National Library of Uganda, offered to teach members of the group to use computers and the internet.

“We became regular visitors to the library, learning to use computers properly, and researching YouTube for new craft skills — how to make kilims, to dye mats, to make mirrors and Christmas decorations.

“Just before Christmas, we rented a shop to sell our products as gifts. The librarian taught us about digital marketing, using social media, and we also started selling our produce online.

“Now we are doing outreach work to teach craft skills to women in other communities. And next year we will start our own learning channel on YouTube to share skills videos in Ugandan languages,” says Phionah.



Photo by Mwesigwa Allan

“We are happy with the income we are earning. We could not have succeeded without the help of the library and the skills we learnt there.”

– PHIONAH AGABA