



WPDI UGANDA Acholi Sub-Region

2023 Annual Report

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Introduction

Despite progress in the recent period, the Acholi Sub-Region remains one of the poorest regions in the country, with a population, estimated to be around 2.4 million, collectively marked by the aftermath of the war between Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda. More than 14 years of peace have enabled the people in the region to restart their lives with trade booming throughout the region across the borders to neighboring countries such as South Sudan, which is also enjoying relative peace now. However, the scars of civil war and marginalization cannot heal overnight. In recent years, for instance, numerous and intermittent conflicts about land use and ownership have been observed in the Acholi Sub-Region. This has stirred debates at the national level, but too little importance is given to fostering local processes of peace and transitional justice.

Unsurprisingly, such prevalence of land conflict has its roots in the LRA conflict. During that period, the rebels of the LRA targeted civilians and waged attacks on schools, public places and communities, with massive internal displacement as one of the side-effects of the conflict. In turn, the extensive displacement and the death of elders during that period has divested local communities of land ownership, laying the ground for the disputes of today and calling for approaches to local conflict that are bottom up - to address realities as they are perceived by involved actors - inclusive - to leave no one in the processes of peace and the promotion of

development-, and, especially, long-term - to ensure that solutions can take root in daily practices and be genuinely appropriated by all stakeholders.

Bottom-up action, inclusive initiatives and long-term projects are indeed the hallmark of the work carried out by WPDI in all its target locations and notably so in Acholi where we launched our first pilot programs in 2012 at the very time of our foundation. Building on the lessons learned from the previous years, WPDI and its partners have continued in 2023 to bring services to the communities of Acholi, starting with Gulu, where our Community Learning Center (CLC) has served more than 4,400 beneficiaries. In addition, 19,289 individuals benefited from different community engagement - many of them carried out by our 305 peacemakers - such as Community Dialogues and local leaders training -, in which respectively 4,841 and 140 individuals participated - and conflict resolution programs in 99 schools - through which we trained 14,308 learners and teachers. These initiatives have represented, we believe, a significant contribution to the culture of peace in the Sub-Region. We have also met great success in our other areas of action, notably on Livelihoods, with 99 WPDI-incubated businesses benefiting more than 7,100 individuals, for whom economic development has a very concrete meaning. Much more has happened throughout the year, which is detailed in this report that we are proud to present to our partners, our stakeholders, and the public at large.



Forest Whitaker Visits the Acholi Sub-Region

For the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, WPDl founder and CEO, Forest Whitaker, joined a WPDl mission to Uganda to visit programs and interact directly with beneficiaries, stakeholders and WPDl staff. Mr. Whitaker and WPDl's Executive Director, Caroline Descombris, were joined by representatives of some of our important partners, including Teresa Vieglins, Deputy Secretary General of the Swedish Postcode Foundation, Laura Chow, Head of Charities at the People's Postcode Lottery (UK) and George Land, Senior Vice President of NBA Africa.

He traveled to the Acholi Sub-Region where WPDl has been operating peacebuilding programs since 2016. Forest and the group notably visited our Community Learning Center in Gulu city, where WPDl runs various different activities focused on peacebuilding and sustainable development. These include Business training, Arts and Crafts and various children's activities. He exchanged with local Youth Peacemakers who have been trained through WPDl programs to become agents to peace and positive development in their communities. His return was celebrated at each location that was visited, with dancing, music and community events.



Key Achievements

31,924 Individuals reached by Lead Peacemakers

28

Lead Youth Peacemakers

277

Local Youth Peacemakers

305

Total Youth Peacemakers

PEACEBUILDING

217

CRE trainees

1,321

Participants in Cinema for Peace

5,417

Participants in CLC Advocacy campaigns

6,955

Total

99

Schools hosting WPDI programs

14,308

Learners and teachers trained

12,635

People reached through advocacy campaigns in schools

26,943

Total participants in school-based peacebuilding

46

Community Dialogues held

4,841

Participants in dialogues

140

Local leaders trained

4,981

Total participants in community level peacebuilding

LIVELIHOOD

566

ICT trainees

252

Entrepreneurship trainees

101

Vulnerable women trained in business

164

Arts and Crafts trainees

1,083

Total trainees in vocational courses

20

SMEs created in 2023

99

SMEs supported by WPDI in total

1,110

Jobs created

5,927

Indirect beneficiaries of businesses (families)

7,037

Beneficiaries of all SMEs

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

1,768

Trauma Healing participants

4

Teams managed by WPDI

64

Regular training participants

13,970

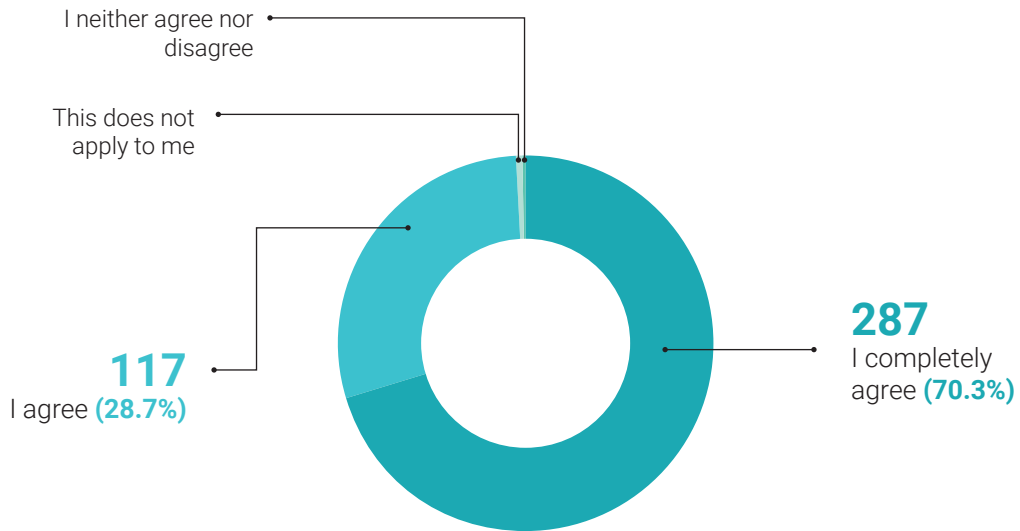
Participants in events

PEACE THROUGH SPORTS



Survey Results

I have been able to apply the knowledge and skills learned from WPDI in my personal or professional life



Feedback from Local and National Stakeholders



"Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, today is a special day for all of us in Gulu District. As one of the leaders I would like to Congratulate WPDI's Female football team for the hard work and dedication toward being awarded a prestigious trophy as the runner up for the Gulu District Female Football team. I have also attended all the programs from WPDI, recently I attended the graduation of teachers and pupils from Omoti Hill and community dialogues organized in Paibona. I was very impressed with these activities! No NGO has ever impacted the community like WPDI, I applaud their work and commend them passionately. I pledge to continue to work with them, thanks go to WPDI Management."

Hon MP Wokorach Simon,
Member of Parliament for Aswa - Gulu District



"In my experience in Agago District as the RDC, I can rate WPDI as one of the best community and active partners. Even today in this dialogue, in Wipolo, with over 500 people, I am impressed with their approach to community and the promotion of peaceful coexistence. I have attended almost every program implementation for WPDI, I can rate it 8/10 because even after the implementation the impact continues to be felt. Thank you WPDI Leadership and continue working closely with Agago, as my office we will support your intervention in this district."

Ms. Susan Moro Akot,
Deputy Resident District Commissioner





Vectors for Change

To generate meaningful impact on the ground, closest to our target populations, we implement our activities through what we call vectors of change. These vectors enable us to be positioned at the community level. We have two such vectors: cohorts of young leaders known as the peacemakers, and our Community Learning Centers (CLC). The Youth Peacemakers serve as relays in their communities, building capacity for peacebuilding and reducing conflict. Our Community Learning Center provides free access to training, connectivity, awareness-raising events, and other resources for any community members. Throughout the year, WPDI has been able to support beneficiaries in Acholi through close cooperation with grassroots organizations, local youths, and trusted partners.

Mobilizing Youth Leaders to Drive Change at the Grassroots

31,924 Individuals reached by Lead Peacemakers

Lead Youth Peacemakers

28

Local Youth Peacemakers

277

In 2023, a group of 28 Youth Peacemakers, comprising 14 females and 14 males, actively implemented programs with and on behalf of WPDI, with the support of 277 local youths. This cohort of young leaders has significantly contributed to WPDI interventions within their respective communities. Their responsibilities encompass a wide range of activities, including mobilizing communities, delivering peacebuilding and business training, conducting advocacy campaigns, facilitating dialogues on community issues, and providing psychosocial support to those in need.

Throughout the year, the group regularly participated in key awareness events organized by WPDI, such as the International Women's Day celebration, the Day of the African Child, International Peace celebrations, International Youth celebration, UN Day commemoration, and the 16 days of gender activism. Additionally, they conducted Conflict

Resolution Education (CRE) training sessions for learners in primary and secondary schools across the Acholi Sub-Region. These efforts were complemented by advocacy campaigns aimed at addressing challenges affecting children's well-being and education.

The impact of these initiatives is evident in the promotion of a culture of peace within schools, fostering peaceful co-existence, enhancing discipline, and improving academic performance among learners. Moreover, there has been a noticeable improvement in attitudes and positive transformations in the relationships between learners and teachers. Peacemakers from Gulu District and City actively participated in the International Youth Day 2023 event, where WPDI was recognized for its significant contributions to promoting peaceful coexistence and livelihood within the community and the broader Sub-Region.

WPDI Staff and Peacemakers participated in the UN Day of Commemoration where presentations were made about the different programs which took place in Kaunda Ground Gulu City:





“The Year 2023 was such a profound year for me, I conducted a number of trainings in peacebuilding and conflict resolutions, including advocacy campaigns, and community dialogues. I delivered training in schools, at the CLC, and within my community. Always aiming at promoting peaceful coexistence and resilience, thus creating a sustainable ground for peace and development. Besides this, I was able to train youth and women groups in Business and Entrepreneurship. Most of them are currently engaged in their income-generating activities. They are able to apply the knowledge acquired from the training to improve on their business and grow. Seeing how these training sessions are changing the lives of the people in my community makes me content with my work. These activities helped me develop personally by achieving my dreams of improving the livelihood of the people of my community. I am grateful for what WPD has done, personally to me, and to the people of my community.”

Duerel Olanya,
Youth Peacemaker in Gulu City



“This year I was able to engage in a number of activities such as community dialogues and advocacy campaigns that saw a number of issues within the communities addressed, peacebuilding training in schools which included teacher’s trainings, empowering them with skills to be able to work as agents of change in their respective communities. I also trained youth and women in business and entrepreneurship skills, this training saw many women and youth starting up their own businesses. All these activities were so remarkable and impacted many lives.”

Irene Lutwala,
Youth Peacemaker in Gulu City



Improving Local Access to Skills, Knowledge and Connectivity

23,840 Total People reached through CLC activities

<p>Conflict Resolution Trainees</p> <p>217</p>	<p>Participants in Cinema for Peace</p> <p>1,321</p>	<p>Participants in CLC Advocacy campaigns</p> <p>5,417</p>	<p>ICT trainees</p> <p>566</p>
<p>Entrepreneurship trainees</p> <p>252</p>	<p>Vulnerable women trained in business</p> <p>101</p>	<p>Arts and Crafts trainees</p> <p>164</p>	<p>Sexual & Reproductive Health participants</p> <p>915</p>
<p>Trauma healing participants</p> <p>853</p>	<p>Trainees from the Peace Through Sports program</p> <p>64</p>	<p>Participants in competitions events</p> <p>13,970</p>	



The Gulu Community Learning Center (CLC) is situated in Gulu City, adjacent to the Ministry of Work. In the year 2023, the CLC welcomed over 1,300 visitors/guests who benefitted from various resources available for free, including a library and free connectivity. The CLC serves as a platform for the implementation of WPDI activities, including certified short courses covering Conflict Resolution, Human Rights, ICT, Business and Entrepreneurship, Arts and Crafts, Trauma Healing, and Peace through Sports. Moreover, the center provides meeting spaces for advocacy campaigns, and indoor screenings for Cinema for Peace. External partners, such as the Uganda Business and Technical Examination Board and the Acholi Network local organization utilize the training facility for their participants on specific occasions.





Peacebuilding as Grassroots Empowerment

Mediation Among Community Members

Community Dialogues for Sowing Seeds of Peace

Community Dialogues held

46

Participants in dialogues

4,841

Local leaders trained

140

In response to pressing issues such as land disputes and Gender-Based Violence, WPDI initiated community dialogues with a twofold strategy: first, engaging in county-level discussions to analyze conflict and promote peaceful co-existence among young men and women, and second, facilitating inter-ethnic dialogues between districts.

WPDI believes that constructive dialogue, involving both community members and leaders, is essential for addressing conflicts internally and devising appropriate solutions for the long term. Through these dialogues, which reached, in 2023, a total of 4,841 individuals across the districts of the Acholi Sub-Region, participants shared experiences and perceptions regarding potential conflict triggers, fostering a collective understanding of underlying issues.

The dialogues covered a spectrum of topics including land disputes, Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and Environmental Degradation, spanning districts such as Gulu, Amuru, Omoro, Nwoya, Pader, Agago, Lamwo, and Kitgum. Noteworthy successes emerged from specific dialogues, underscoring WPDI's impact and earning recognition from local leaders.

For instance, in Gulu City, a dialogue addressed gang conflicts, leading to commitments from both street gangs and local leaders to collaborate on community peace efforts. Similarly, in Pader, a dispute between the Lunyiri Community and Lunyiri Primary School saw resolutions focused on enforcing sub-county laws and promoting education. Additionally, in Agoro Sub County, post-election violence prompted calls for conflict resolution training and the establishment of elders' forums to manage internal disputes.

Other dialogues tackled issues such as drug abuse among youth in Gulu City and environmental degradation in Ogom Sub County, Pader District. These dialogues resulted in concrete actions, including community-led initiatives to combat drug abuse and environmental conservation efforts.

In summary, WPDI's community dialogues are crucial platforms for fostering understanding, addressing grievances, and promoting peacebuilding initiatives across the Acholi Sub-Region. Through collaborative efforts with local stakeholders, WPDI aims to facilitate lasting solutions to complex social challenges.



Chairman LC3 Ogom Sub County Planting 1 of 1500 trees donated by WPDI during the community dialogues in Ogom Sub County, Pader



Women passed messages of peace and praised WPDI through traditional flute songs



“The high rate of Gender-Based Violence in Lunyiri Pader District particularly, is detrimental to the wellbeing of our children. That’s why there have always been issues between the parents and the School Administration. I would like to applaud WPDI for the work well done in ensuring that all these efforts and resources are mobilized to address the plight within our Community.”

Odwar,
Chairman Parent Teacher Association
representative - Aket Ket Primary School



“Most parents seem not to know the values of education because most children end their schooling in P.7 and don't attend school any further. Indeed, it's hard to get them in secondary school. This is often due to neglect of children by parents. WPDI coming to intervene on these issues is timely, when you look at the negative attitude towards education of certain parents.”

Mego hon. Abuto Dorine
Local Leader on GBV issues



Training Community Leaders to Cultivate Peace

WPDI recognizes that fostering harmony within communities requires equipping leaders with the necessary skills in peacebuilding and mediation. This approach seeks to address the root causes of conflicts by empowering village-level leaders to address them. Originally conceived to involve local eminent figures in the follow up of our Community Dialogues, the core objectives of community leaders' training include enhancing the capacity of local leaders in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, enabling them to effectively support their communities, advocate for fundamental human rights, and defend the most vulnerable members of society in the Acholi Sub-Region.





In line with promoting inter-community engagement for peace, reconciliation, and social cohesion, WPDI aims to increase the participation, awareness, and influence of youth and women in peacebuilding initiatives. Additionally, these training sessions emphasize the importance of peaceful coexistence among leaders. Each community leaders' training session spans two days and accommodates no fewer than 20 participants. The curriculum incorporates lectures, group discussions, brainstorming activities, and real-life testimonies from the local context, utilizing both local and national historical events to enhance knowledge retention. Participants undergo pre-test examinations at the beginning of each course and post-training evaluations upon completion.

In the first semester, 40 leaders underwent training, followed by 100 leaders in the second semester.



"I met the WPDI Program Coordinator during the coordination meeting and that's when I got to know about WPDI. Indeed we are so glad the sessions conducted during the community leaders training bridged the gap over the brewing conflicts between the technical and political wings in Gulu University."

Robert Kihondwa,
DISO Gulu District



"I must commend WPDI for the work well done, the pieces of training we have received changed a lot about the leadership trajectory in the Gulu District and we must say thank you for training the whole team."

Komakech,
Chairperson of all the LC3s



"I thank WPDI for this impactful training and indeed I have witnessed a lot of changes in these leaders throughout the many dialogues and mediations conducted. This demonstrates that the training will yield a positive impact."

Phoebe,
Councillor 5 Owalo and Women Representative in the District Council



Conflict Resolution Skills for Everyone in the Community



Integral to the mandate of WPDI is the assumption that peace is a shared responsibility of every member in the community and that it should, subsequently, be taught as a skillset that anyone should have irrespective of their age, gender or status. To this effect, we have developed an array of programs aimed at equipping all members of the community with adapted skills and competences, including youths, children and adults as well as local leaders. In 2023, our peace education and advocacy program reached more than 5,400 individuals in Gulu, further consolidating our footprint in a region where we have been established for more than a decade now.

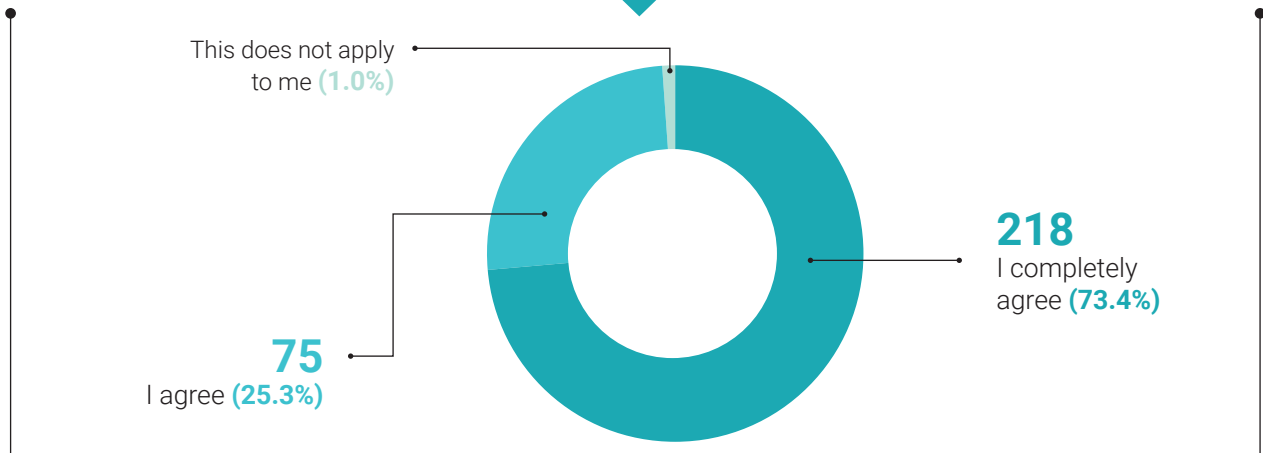
Conflict Resolution Education at the Community Learning Center



The training in Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) has remained one of the most appreciated offers of WPDI in Gulu. It attracts civically minded individuals who are eager to use their skills and contribute to peace in their own capacity. The CRE course is tailored for the Sub-Region, which grapples with insecurity stemming from frequent cattle raids. This comprehensive course empowers community members with the essential knowledge and skills necessary to effectively de-escalate such instances of insecurity. Delivered by WPDI Conflict Resolution Education Trainers and Youth Peacemakers, the training sessions take place both at the Community Learning Center (CLC) and within the communities themselves.

In 2023 we conducted a survey among 297 former Peace Education / Conflict Resolution trainees in Acholi.

'I have been able to apply the knowledge and skills learned from WPDI in my personal or professional life' (297 CRE trainees)



“The training I attended has equipped me with relevant skills that will better my work as a leader in my community. I have gained knowledge on mediation that I hope to implement.”

Says Olowo Philip,



“With the skills I gained from this training, I was able to successfully mediate a conflict between my colleagues and saw peace restored.”

Says Aluka Teddy



Providing Conflict Resolution Education at the Gulu Prison Main

The training, benefiting 90 staff, was conducted successfully in November 2023 at the Gulu Prison Main in Gulu City. The purpose was to build and strengthen the knowledge of the Gulu Main Prison staff in conflict resolution, management, and transformative peacebuilding to be able to demonstrate these skills in managing conflict within the inmates and staff of Main Prison while scaling up promotion of lasting peace through supporting emotional wellbeing of inmates and nurturing seeds of hope that would translate into peaceful coexistence among the inmates and staff of Gulu Prison Main in Gulu City.

Cinema for Peace



This year, Cinema for Peace has played a significant role in the Acholi Sub-Region, benefiting over 1,321 individuals through thoughtfully curated film screenings. For the program, WPDI selects films that address critical themes like conflict, resilience, and humanitarian efforts, sparking meaningful reflection among viewers. Through documentaries, such as those showcasing the challenges faced by

medical professionals and humanitarian workers in conflict zones, and follow-up debates, the aim is to inspire action. Cinema for Peace has made a tangible difference in the community, promoting awareness and support for peacebuilding efforts. This activity also involves drawing and painting activities especially for children to reflect and portray the lessons learned.



"I remember the first time I saw a film that truly reflected my family's reality—a reality marked by discrimination, injustice, and systemic barriers. It was a moment of validation, of recognition, and of empowerment. Cinema for peace has not only brought entertainment but presents an opportunity for us to see firsthand different experiences in the world portrayed through movies and to teach us lessons of positive impact. I like watching movies at WPDI's center. I get a chance to meet with other friends and also engage in drawing and painting. Films spark conversations, open hearts, and inspire solidarity, forging connections across cultures, borders, and backgrounds. As a vulnerable community, we continue to face challenges—from discrimination and violence to poverty and displacement. Yet, we draw strength from the stories of resilience, courage, and hope that Cinema for Peace has brought to light."

Agenrwot Gloria



"I watched movies purely for entertainment, but my perspective shifted when I attended a screening at WPDI's center. The film left a profound impact, teaching me about self-determination and racial pride. It was more than just a movie; it was an inspiration and a lesson in empowerment. In our communities, we face numerous challenges that require dialogue and collective action to address effectively. WPDI's Cinema for Peace program embodies this ethos, bringing people together to share experiences and learn from one another. Through thought-provoking films and discussions, the program educates and empowers us to navigate the complexities of the world and embrace the principles of mediation and conflict resolution."

Namayanja Patricia



Advocacy Campaigns to Give Peace a Voice



WPDI holds advocacy campaigns and cultural events at the Community Learning Center to raise awareness of the community on key issues pertaining to peace, human rights, social development and inclusion. Often connected to national and international observances (notably UN Days), the campaigns have focused on issues of relevance for the peoples of Acholi, including teenage pregnancy, school dropout, substance abuse, early marriage, violence, conflict, Gender-Based Violence, and child labour. Open to all the members of the community, the campaigns and events are designed to ensure that children and youths have an effective voice and can demonstrate their capacity to address issues of relevance to everyone. In effect, these events also have a wider outcome in terms of increasing the cohesion of the community.

Advocacy campaign in the Gulu area against teenage pregnancies and school dropout rates



This year, several advocacy campaigns were delivered in villages around Gulu City. The objective was to raise awareness of factors that deter children and youth from pursuing education. The particular focus was on teenage pregnancy and school dropout risks. The delivery of the campaigns was adapted to each context. Indeed, Youth Peacemakers and children delivered awareness-raising messages on the radio, a group of women made a presentation in their village to raise awareness on the two issues, and in Kitgum, a group discussion on the themes of school dropout rates and teenage pregnancy engaged all the community members in attendance. A notable success was the multi-generational engagement in these different events. Parents and their children participated and were sensitized on these issues.



“I am very happy for this advocacy program during the holiday break because it urges us, the parents, to be vigilant for our children and support them to focus more on their future. Thank you WPDI for this wonderful opportunity.”

Santina Akullu
Parent participant in an advocacy campaign



“I would like to applaud every child for having turned up in good numbers for this advocacy meeting, and the parents also. WPDI is doing such wonderful work by engaging parents in this fight against the hurdles that distract our children from achieving their dreams.”

Opio Nichola,
Responsible for Children’s affairs in his local community



Media Presence of WPDI through Radio Talk Shows



WPDI’s radio programs play a crucial role in promoting peaceful co-existence among communities residing in conflict-prone areas, a cornerstone for fostering community development. Recognizing that thriving community projects hinge on harmonious relations, our broadcasts on various radio stations like Radio Tembo FM, Might Fire, Luo FM, Mega FM, and RUping FM deliver messages of peace, tolerance, and reconciliation in Luo, Kiswahili, and English languages.

Our broadcasts have reached over 3 million individual listeners, bringing them positive perspectives on how to cope with conflict and other challenges. Through these initiatives, WPDI continues to be a driving force in promoting peace and reconciliation, paving the way for sustainable community development.



Bringing Skills and Values for Peace Into Schools

26,943 Total participants in school-based peacebuilding

Schools hosting WPDI programs

99

Learners and teachers trained

14,308

People reached through advocacy campaigns in schools

12,635

In the past year, WPDI maintained its commitment to nurturing a culture of peace, reconciliation, and dialogue among young learners, fostering a harmonious environment characterized by reduced conflicts and enhanced discipline within schools. Our efforts in schools have yielded tangible results that were confirmed by the feedback we received from educators on the outcomes that they could observe. We are now active in 99 schools, including 63 Secondary Schools. Trained students interested in impacting their schools with their newfound CRE knowledge are supported to create Peace Clubs. Within these clubs, they convene and address ongoing issues within their schools and come up with solutions. They also brainstorm on campaign ideas.

“Before I joined the peacebuilding training I was such an undisciplined pupil with no respect for fellow learners but this training has shaped me into a better person.”

Omara Brian,
Pupil in Primary School



“The peacebuilding training in my school has created a conducive learning environment in my class that was known for indiscipline cases. CRE has empowered me to become a peer mediator in my school and be able to help others.”

Olanya Griffin,
Student at Paicho Secondary School



Training School Teachers in Conflict Resolution Education

Building the capacity of teachers in peace education is the foundation of nurturing a generation of peaceful young leaders by addressing drivers that could expose them to indiscipline, drug abuse and criminal gangs at school. This year, WPDI Youth Peacemakers and Staff trained and graduated 808 teachers. Some of the topics covered included:

- Understanding conflict,
- Peace,
- Violence,
- Development and sustainable development,
- Communication and active listening,
- Conflict analysis,
- Equality and diversity,
- Servant leadership,
- Conflict approaches,
- Stages of conflict,
- Emotional intelligence,
- Negotiation & mediation among others.



“As a school administrator, I am very grateful for this training. I have been able to gain more skills that will help improve my management and also improve my relationship with colleagues, teachers, parents and students.”

Lakot Monica Anywar,
Headteacher, PP Newton High School



“I have been a very poor person in terms of anger management and this always affected my relationships but through this training, I have learnt emotional intelligence that I hope to apply to make me a better person.”

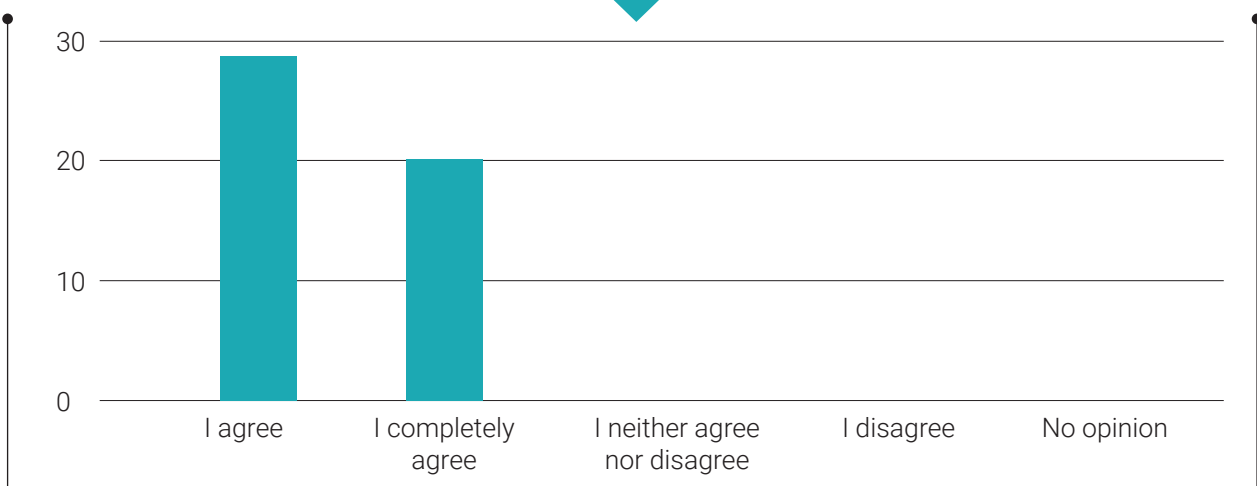
Odoo Jimmy,
Olya Primary School



In a survey conducted in 2023 within school communities of Acholi where WPDI runs peace education programs, 49 educators at 12 schools provided feedback on these activities. 100% of them agreed that ‘the program of WPDI is effectively teaching and promoting peaceful attitudes, self-discipline, nonviolence, and other civic mindsets’. 100% of them agreed that ‘the peace education program of WPDI is a useful contribution for preventing or addressing bullying and other forms of conflict and violence in school’. 100% of them agreed that ‘the Peace Education program of WPDI helps to improve learning conditions for the learners

of the school’. Overall, the stakeholders praised the comprehensive, educative, and beneficial nature of the program. Stakeholders have expressed a strong desire for the program’s continuation and expansion, with suggestions for enrolling all learners and extending training to parents and the wider community. Stakeholders recommended integrating peacebuilding practices into the school timetable, expanding the program’s scope, and incorporating computer training. The feedback underscores a commitment to fostering a culture of peace and provides a comprehensive guide for refining and expanding the program.

Do you agree with the following statement: “The program of WPDI is effectively teaching and promoting peaceful attitudes, self-discipline, nonviolence, and other civic mindsets”?
(49 responses)





Livelihood: Opportunities for Socio- Economic Empowerment

A key aspect of our work in Acholi is to help individuals and communities improve their livelihood conditions. To this effect, we strive to provide our beneficiaries with access to skills in ICT, Entrepreneurship, and Arts and Crafts that they can use to boost their career. In 2023, a total of 1,083 beneficiaries participated in our training programs. Besides this positive result, the impact of the vocational training program on the beneficiaries can be observed through the surveys that we conduct each year among them six months after courses are completed. In 2023, 111 former vocational trainees of Acholi responded to our questionnaire, 100% of whom declared that they had used their skills in their daily or professional lives. 89% of them reported experiencing positive economic outcomes, with 5% stating 'I found a job', 46% stating 'My income increased', and 38% stating 'I created a business'. Fostering the development of businesses is indeed one of the key objectives of our Livelihood program.

Ensuring that our trainees have opportunities for launching or strengthening their business, we hold business plan competitions that serve to identify promising projects that we subsequently backstop to secure their development into profitable enterprises.

In 2023, our Business Plan Competition offered former trainees opportunities to win capital start-up grants to develop a business, resulting in the launch of 20 new businesses. In conclusion, our comprehensive livelihood program has contributed to enhancing the well-being of individuals and communities, fostering economic empowerment and community development in the region.

Vocational Skills for Personal and Career Development

1,083 Total trainees in vocational courses

ICT trainees

566

Entrepreneurship trainees

252

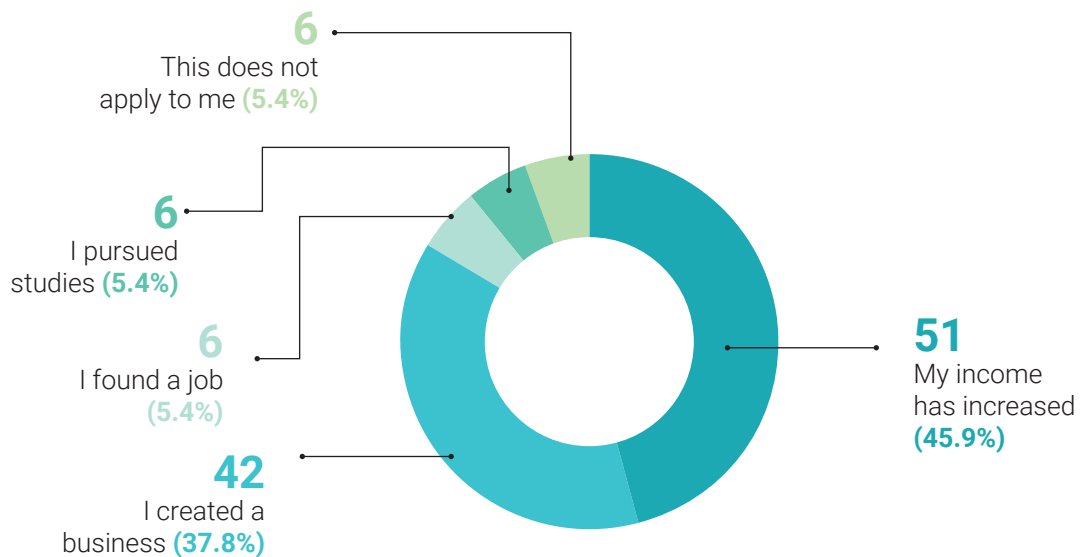
Vulnerable women trained in business

101

Arts and Crafts trainees

164

'Has the program improved your career prospects?' (111 responses)



Information and Communication Technologies

This year has seen significant strides in our ICT program, thanks to the invaluable support from WPDI partners. Our comprehensive approach has empowered individuals across the Acholi Sub-Region, with notable achievements including:



Cohort Training:

We are pleased to announce the successful training completion of six cohorts, offering Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced levels of Digital and Computer Literacy training. This inclusive strategy has addressed diverse skill levels and bridged the technological gap in the region, benefiting youths directly.



Special Partnerships:

Strategic collaborations have been instrumental in extending our reach. Notably, our partnership with the Uganda Business and Technical Examination Board in February facilitated the training of 50 participants from business institutes in the Acholi Sub-Region. This collaboration not only raised our profile but also enhanced community engagement and awareness.



SPIKE PRIME Education Program:

In June, we launched the SPIKE PRIME education program, made possible through generous donations of SPIKE kits by Ericsson. This innovative initiative focuses on teaching coding using physical objects, providing an engaging learning environment for over 100 children and young adults. The SPIKE PRIME program has proven instrumental in inspiring learners and democratizing the educational experience.



Advanced ICT Training:

Recognizing the demand for specialized skills, we introduced this course covering Operating System Installation, Application Software Installation, Troubleshooting, and Maintenance. To bolster our participants’ cybersecurity awareness, we incorporated cybersecurity training supported by Cisco. This advanced training equips our youth with practical, industry-relevant skills, enhancing their employability and bolstering the community’s overall cybersecurity resilience.

As we reflect on these achievements, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our partners, sponsors, and dedicated individuals who have contributed to the success of these initiatives. Looking ahead, we remain steadfast in our commitment to advancing digital literacy and fostering technological empowerment in the Acholi Sub-Region. Together, we can continue shaping a brighter, more inclusive technological future for our community.

Impact Story: Overcoming Barriers to Education



Background:

Candiya Proscovia Nanna is a 24-year-old woman who embodies the program’s dedication to breaking barriers and fostering positive change.

Raised in a poor family, Candiya faced obstacles on the path to education, particularly in computer studies. However, the discovery of WPDI was a beacon of hope.





Discovery of the Program:

Candiya became acquainted with WPDI through local outreach efforts. During a community dialogue organized by WPDI, in which she participated, she was introduced to the organization’s mission, sparking her interest and inspiring her to embark on an educational journey with the support of WPDI.



Challenges Faced:

In her pursuit of education, Candiya encountered many hurdles, primarily stemming from her family’s financial struggles. The costs associated with computer studies, compounded by the lack of resources in her community, created significant obstacles to pursuing her dreams of education.



WPDI’s Support:

Through WPDI’s programs, she was able to tackle financial barriers head-on and received the support and resources needed to achieve her goal of learning skills to improve her career prospects. In addition to material support and concrete skills, joining WPDI also meant, to her, accessing an enabling environment where she was able to gain confidence in herself and her capacity to learn.

Testimonial feedback from Candiya Proscovia Nanna



“Joining WPDI has been a turning point in my life. Emerging from a family with limited means, accessing education, particularly in computer studies, felt like a hurdle. Enrolling in WPDI’s program was a ray of hope breaking through the clouds. The mentorship and guidance I received have been instrumental in shaping my educational journey. The program instills a profound sense of purpose and resilience. I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to be part of this initiative, and I can confidently assert that WPDI is not merely an organization; it’s a catalyst for change in the lives of individuals like me.”

Business and Entrepreneurship

The Business and Entrepreneurship program offered by WPDI addresses the challenges faced by local community members striving to become successful entrepreneurs or improve their livelihoods. In Uganda, many businesses struggle to survive beyond their first year, underscoring the critical importance of acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for effective business management and sustainability.

WPDI’s Business and Entrepreneurship course is designed to impart practical expertise to young men and women, guiding them through every stage of business development, from idea generation to comprehensive management strategies. Structured into basic and intermediate levels, the program equips participants with essential competencies

for navigating the complexities of entrepreneurship successfully. Upon completing the course, trainees who demonstrate viable business plans are eligible for startup grants awarded through our business plan competitions.

In 2023, 252 individuals enrolled in the training offered by WPDI, with positive outcomes, according to the surveys we conducted during the year: 100% of the 92 individuals who had responded to our questionnaire declared that they had used their newly gained skills in their personal and professional lives. We were additionally satisfied to learn that 97% reported experiencing positive economic outcomes, including 52% stating ‘My income increased’, and 43% stating ‘I created a business’.



“The few months of training were incredibly productive for me. This transformative program addresses real-life challenges head-on, revealing the critical factors behind business failures. Through WPDI, I’ve gained a deeper understanding of the importance of market research, customer focus, and effective financial management.”

Olanya Derrick



“Since joining this course, my perspective on business success has completely changed. I’ve come to appreciate the fundamental aspects often overlooked in business management, such as record-keeping, financial literacy, and understanding the business environment. This training is indispensable for empowering young entrepreneurs, and I commend WPDI for offering such impactful opportunities. I hope to see more youths benefit from this initiative.”

Apiyo Scovia Perphency



Arts and Crafts

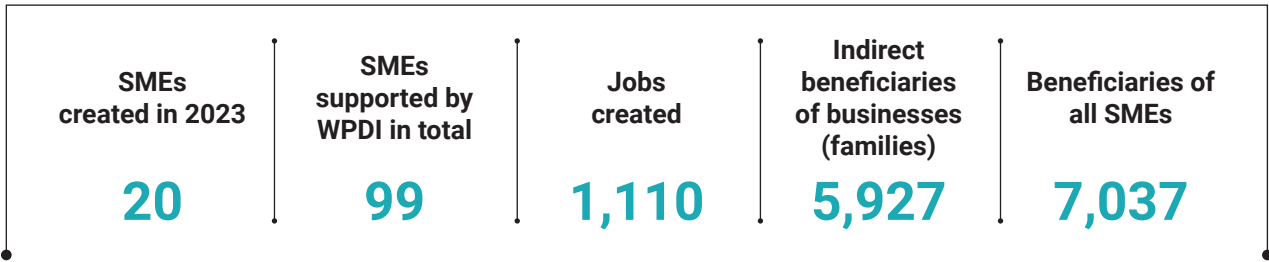
This year, 164 individuals enrolled in our program. Tailoring and Arts and Crafts sessions run over several months, covering a diverse range of topics, including tailoring and garment cutting, soap making (both liquid and bar), craft bags, and craft shoes. Through these initiatives, we aim not only to impart practical skills but also to empower individuals with the tools they need to shape their futures with creativity and confidence.

“I recently completed a three-month course at WPDI Gulu, and prior to joining the program, I was facing significant challenges. Unemployment weighed heavily on me, and life felt stagnant and disappointing. I earnestly prayed for an opportunity to acquire new skills and improve my circumstances. Before enrolling in the WPDI program, I worked as an office assistant on a contractual basis, but the job was not providing the stability or fulfillment I desired. However, since undergoing training at the CLC, my outlook has transformed. The skills and knowledge I’ve gained have been invaluable, and I’m currently honing my abilities through ongoing training. Now, I proudly operate a stall at the market, where I utilize my newfound sewing skills. This venture has not only provided me with a source of income but has also empowered me to contribute meaningfully to my family’s well-being. I am deeply grateful to all my tutors and the entire WPDI staff for their unwavering support, mentorship, and dedication.”

Apio Caspher



Supporting Income-Generating Projects

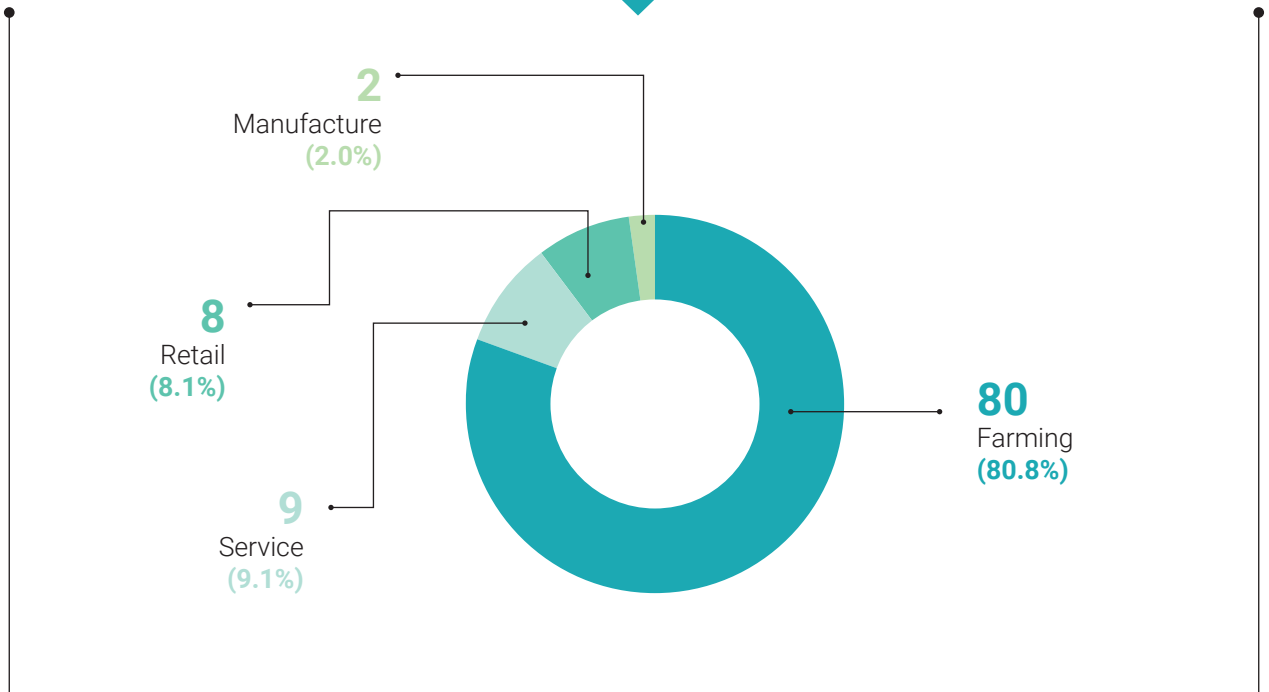


In 2023, WPDI continued to support a total of 99 businesses across the 15 counties of the Acholi Sub-Region. Of these businesses, 20 were launched in 2023. These newly funded projects include:

- Six graduate groups engaged in various activities such as metal fabrication, shea body butter production, tailoring, performing arts, electrical appliances, and car washing bay.
- Four vulnerable youth groups involved in farming.
- 10 women’s groups, with 9 focused on farming and 1 specializing in produce buying and selling.

The 99 businesses have collectively created over 1,110 jobs, indirectly benefitting nearly 6,000 individuals.

Types of WPDI-supported businesses active in 2023 in Acholi





Supporting Women- and Youth-Led Businesses

During this period, WPDI provided special assistance to aspiring entrepreneurs from its two priority groups, namely vulnerable women and youths. With the assistance of its Peacemakers, WPDI initiated 16 Business and Entrepreneurship training sessions across 15 counties in the Acholi Sub-Region. These sessions, benefiting 195 individuals (84 women and 111 youths), aimed to equip participants with basic-level business skills and are currently progressing to intermediate-level training. This comprehensive approach seeks to enhance their capacity to establish and manage enterprises of their choice, with a focus on a three-month intensive program including market survey and business plan development to qualify for business grants.

The WPDI team conducted monitoring and provided technical support to five groups (three women groups and two youth groups), undergoing business skills training across Gulu city, Naoya, Omoro, Tochi, and Kitgum municipality. This support bolstered the delivery of knowledge by Peacemakers during both basic and intermediate level training sessions. Furthermore, a total of 317 beneficiaries (198 women, 119 youth) from 26 supported business groups across ASR received monitoring, mentoring,

and technical support. This initiative aimed to address capacity gaps in operations and financial management, ensuring the functionality and sustainability of the income-generating groups.

Notable progress and impacts were observed, including increased income levels among group members, improved savings strategies, and enhanced productivity in various businesses. For instance, Okonya Jimmy from Waloku kwowa youth group in Agago north utilized credit from VSLAs to start a salon/barber business, significantly improving his living standards. Similarly, the women's group called God's Gift Produce Dealers, in Aswa Gulu district, witnessed increased membership and savings, enabling them to meet basic needs and invest in education, healthcare, and businesses. Tic Ki Niye Produce Dealers in Gulu city saved a substantial amount monthly, with plans to become a leading wholesale supplier. Moreover, the project provided second-chance education opportunities, with members achieving diploma and degree certificates. These successes, including financial stability and social support, highlight the transformative impact of WPDI's interventions.



Types of the 30 Women Groups' businesses active in Acholi (of which 20 were created in 2023)

Farming

29

Retail

1

Types of the 4 Youth Groups' businesses active in 2023 in Acholi

Farming

4

Shea Glow Cosmetics: A Tale of Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Success

"Through WPDI, we learned to think outside the box, utilizing locally available resources to create a unique product—Shea Cosmetic. This organic skincare product has not only gained support from the Review Committee but has also found favor in the market. WPDI's intervention came at the perfect time, aligning with the birth of our innovative idea. In just a few months, our venture has garnered significant attention, presenting numerous business opportunities. Recently, UN Women invited us to participate in the UN-Women Business EXPO, opening doors for further recognition. Additionally, we've been contacted to organize a national EXPO in Jinja on December 7, 2023. As a group of four young women, this marks a significant opportunity, recognizing us as women in business.



Our business model also positively impacts local women in rural areas, where we source our shea nuts. In the first month of production and operation, Shea Glow Cosmetics achieved a noteworthy sale of 980,000 UGX (approx. 260 USD). During the UN-Women EXPO, our products—3 body creams, 2 body scrubs, and 5 lip balms—generated a total sale of 165,000 UGX (44 USD). Profits will be shared equally after a year of operation, fostering a spirit of collaboration within our group.

The interaction with the deputy Country head of UN-Women at the expo proved invaluable. We received guidance on obtaining certification marks for quality assurance from the Uganda National Bureau of Standards—a process we had already initiated with the support of WPDI and the review team. This certification, once achieved, will undoubtedly expand our market reach nationwide and beyond."



Health and Wellbeing: Pathways to Inner Peace

To make peace with other people, we must first be at peace with ourselves. However, in places affected by chronic violence and poverty, too many individuals experience multifaceted forms of trauma and psychosocial suffering. In this light, our programs on health and wellbeing aim to provide dedicated services in terms of Trauma Healing or Sexual & Reproductive Health, and at raising the awareness of communities on the importance of these issues for individual wellbeing and collective resilience.

Delivering Trauma Healing Services in the Acholi Sub-Region

Trauma healing participants

1,768



As WPDI continues to implement its trauma healing program in the region, a range of activities and services are provided to address the mental health needs of the community. These include:

- Conducting trauma healing and mental health awareness sessions in schools and the community, fostering community ownership for long-term sustainability beyond WPDI's presence.
- Screening survivors for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) and other mental health disorders to identify individuals in need and assess the severity and duration of their symptoms, guiding their counseling therapy.
- Providing Narrative Exposure Therapy for individuals with PTSD, offering tailored therapeutic interventions.
- Conducting follow-ups and home visits for survivors throughout their therapy sessions and recovery process, ensuring ongoing support, monitoring their well-being, and preventing relapse.
- Referring survivors to additional services as needed, ensuring comprehensive support.

These initiatives are crucial in Uganda, given the historical context of conflict, prevalent Gender-Based Violence, HIV/AIDS, and limited access to mental health services. By addressing mental health needs, these programs contribute to building resilience and fostering healthier communities. Looking ahead to 2024, the objectives of the program are outlined as follows:

Raise Awareness and Reduce Stigma:

Increase awareness about mental health issues and trauma, combating the stigma associated with seeking mental health support.

Provide Accessible Mental Health Services:

Enhance access to mental health services, particularly in rural and underserved areas, through community-based programs.

Address Trauma from Armed Conflicts:

Offer counseling and support to individuals who have experienced trauma during conflicts.

Support Gender-Based Violence Survivors:

Provide counseling, legal support, and community resources to empower survivors.

Provide HIV/AIDS-Related Mental Health Support:

Establish programs to address the mental health needs of individuals living with HIV/AIDS and support affected families.

Promote Community-Based Support Systems:

Facilitate the formation of community support groups to foster belonging and understanding, encouraging active participation in mental health awareness and support initiatives.

Capacity Building and Training:

Provide training for mental health professionals, community leaders, and educators on trauma-informed care.

Collaborate with Stakeholders:

Foster coordination and strengthen referrals between government agencies, NGOs, community leaders, and international organizations to enhance mental health initiatives.



“Before the trauma healing/ mental health program I was going through a lot in my life, I couldn’t sleep, haunted by memories of the conflict, anxiety, hallucinations, horror and isolation causing violence in my household between me and my husband. Through counseling and support provided by WPDI, I’ve learned to cope, and now I can finally sleep peacefully.”

Alum Margaret,
from Lapainat, Omoro District



“Being part of a support group made me realize I’m not alone. We share our experiences and support each other. It’s like having a second family. Learning coping strategies has been life-changing. Now, when faced with challenges, I have the tools to manage my emotions and navigate through difficult times.”

Atto Sabina,
Kabedopong, Gulu City





Peace Through Sports



The role of sports in contributing to peace-building efforts has been widely acknowledged, particularly at grassroots and nation-state levels. At the grassroots or community level, sports serve as a valuable tool for fostering environments where individuals can collaborate towards shared goals, demonstrate respect for one another, and share resources and spaces. These elements are essential for peacebuilding processes.

The WPDI “Peace through Sports” program in Gulu City and District utilizes football as a platform to unite young men, women, and communities. An evaluation of the program highlighted that sports serve as a unique avenue for conflicting communities to come together and promote peaceful coexistence. Sport not only brings people together but also enhances dialogue between communities in a sustainable manner. By imparting its values to young people, sports can help prevent various social problems

prevalent in communities affected by violence and poverty. Additionally, it fosters social integration among diverse groups, leveraging the sport’s non-verbal communication, collective experiences, and physical engagement to promote peace and cultural exchange within the Gulu city/district community.

Notable achievements this year include positive changes in attitude, character, and behavior observed in 64 football players following peacebuilding training, ICT and business skills training. The program’s launch saw active participation from 68 stakeholders and community leaders. Additionally, various events such as Peace Engagement celebrations, friendly matches, cultural celebrations, and sports events have benefitted 13,970 individuals, raising awareness and promoting community cohesion. These activities have effectively utilized sports as a means to bridge divides and foster peace within the Gulu City and District community.





"I am so grateful for being chosen among the football players and I am grateful that my skills will be put to good use, without WPKI this wouldn't be possible at all. Thank you to our coach Okello Robert, and WPKI's staff."

Okello,
Team member



"I am delighted to be invited to offer technical guidance for these wonderful football teams, under this program. No other NGO has ever come up with such a beautiful program that connects peace and sports. I am so happy for the good work from Whitaker Peace and Development Initiative."

Opiro Bob,
Referee within Gulu City



"I am glad to have been invited to this training opening at WPKI. Sports is the basis for daily earnings because when you compare what these international players are earning and improving their communities is amazing and I am encouraging each of you to work hard and play hard and you never know what the future holds."

Otto Santos,
Probation and welfare Officer



Impact Story: Empowering Through Football



Background:

Aloyo Peace, a 21-year-old football enthusiast, discovered the program initially hearing about it on a radio station. Eager to pursue her passion, she attended trials at the Prison Primary School football pitch and successfully made it onto the team.



Challenges Faced:

Despite her enthusiasm, Aloyo encountered societal restrictions on women playing football. However, she embraced the opportunity to challenge these norms, showcasing her skills and determination on the field.





Program Impact:

What resonates most with Aloyo about the program is its holistic approach. Beyond football training, she values the additional sessions on peacebuilding, conflict resolution, business skills, and information and communication technology. These sessions not only expanded her skill set but also broadened her understanding of the world around her.

Through friendly matches, Aloyo had the chance to connect with other girls, encouraging them to pursue their passions with confidence, regardless of societal expectations. She has used football as a platform to reach out to conflicted girls in her community, providing support and mentorship to over five individuals. Moreover, her skills in Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) have enabled her to mediate disputes.



Life-changing Experience:

For Aloyo, Peace Through Sports has been a transformative journey. She has forged meaningful friendships within her community and schools, gaining exposure through trips outside her district and even outside Uganda. The program has provided her with invaluable opportunities for personal growth and development.

Her testimonial:



“Peace Through Sports has been a life-changing program for me. It has not only allowed me to pursue my passion for football but has also equipped me with essential skills and knowledge. Through this program, I have connected with fellow girls, encouraged them to break barriers, and provided support to those in need. I have made lasting friendships and gained exposure beyond my wildest dreams. I wholeheartedly encourage other girls to join and experience the transformative power of this program.”

Peace Engagement Days



Peace engagements serve as productive mechanisms to promote peace and address conflicts within the Acholi Sub-Region. These engagements are grounded in various principles, including strengthening local actors' capacities to tackle socio-economic divides, empowering communities to resist violence and participate in peacebuilding, and fostering cultural harmony and community resilience. Additionally, they aim to institutionalize platforms for mindset change and good governance to enhance people's welfare and effectively address insurgency issues. By promoting a culture of peace in conflict-affected communities, these engagements

create an environment conducive to human and national development.

WPDI participated in several peace engagement celebrations, including International Youth Day in Omel, Gulu District, focused on accelerating recovery from COVID-19 and implementing the 2030 Agenda. Another event commemorated UN Day with a theme emphasizing the UN's role in climate action. Notably, football played a significant role in fostering peace between the communities of Alokolum and Bar Dege, exemplified by a match held at Prison Primary School.





"I would like to appreciate WPDI for this opportunity to take part in this wonderful celebration of women. As peacemakers, we have trained women in business skills and Conflict Resolution to help resolve a lot of issues within their communities and we are so grateful for that."

Akongo Irene,
WPDI Youth Peacemaker



"I would like to thank WPDI for the support toward the celebration of Youth Day at the sub-county level. We are so grateful for this support, we will pledge our support in any interventions."

Akena,
Chairman LC Awach Sub County





Conclusion

Conclusion

In 2023, our teams in Acholi further solidified the organization’s commitment to a peaceful sub-region through significant progress achieved in various programs. This was also marked by the initiation of a new ‘Peace Through Sports’ program that engaged youth both in and out of schools within Gulu city and district. This program has been instrumental in demonstrating that youth empowerment can take many forms, notably by combining personal development and health with the acquisition of soft skills in conflict resolution. The community’s vivid and enthusiastic response to the launch of this program has been notable, serving both as an immediate reward to our effort and a signal that our presence in Acholi is highly valued at all levels. This intuitive observation by our teams was indeed corroborated by various evaluation surveys we circulated among our stakeholders, which are featured in this report, and confirm that WPDI’s efforts are recognized and appreciated.

This is particularly related to the successes we achieved in 2023. These include a significant increase in our visibility and popularity, as evidenced by increased social media engagement and demand for training in different schools, communities, and

groups. Community interventions such as dialogues, radio talk shows, sensitization, and engagement celebrations have popularized WPDI, facilitating collaboration and cooperation with leaders. The training of community leaders has led to increased demand from different communities, resulting in more cases being mediated and resolved by the trained community leaders themselves. Similarly, the Community Learning Center hosted more visitors and trainees compared to the previous year, with many local institutions and organizations seeking to use our facilities. Overall, this is a positive sign of collaboration and relevance that speaks to the growing trust attached to the name of WPDI in Acholi. As illustrated in this report, this is the kind of reputation that is the result of hard work and sustained efforts – which we will strive to maintain in the coming years.

As we move forward, we remain dedicated to improving the livelihoods of the people and promoting peaceful co-existence in Acholi. We are grateful for the support of our partners and the strong force of Youth Peacemakers leading peace activities in their communities with the support of our committed staff.



Our Partners

التعليم | education
فوق | above
الجميع | all



Foundation which wishes to remain anonymous





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