

WPD Uganda

Acholi Sub-Region

2024 Annual Report

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Introduction

The Acholi Sub-Region (ASR) of Uganda has long faced challenges related to conflict, socio-economic instability, and underdevelopment. Several factors contribute to the risk of renewed tensions, including inadequate justice and conflict-resolution systems, competition for resources, conservation conflicts, and social divisions. The absence of effective transitional justice mechanisms threatens reconciliation efforts and the long-term stability of the region. Additionally, disputes over land and natural resources continue to fuel local conflicts. Tensions also exist around the Balaalo community, as some local populations resent their large cattle herds, and concerns persist about the presence of Balaalo individuals with military training.

In response to these challenges, various initiatives have been implemented to promote long-term stability, peace and development. Education and

advocacy play a key role in these efforts, with WPDI leading campaigns to encourage learning and address the root causes of instability. WPDI has also integrated Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) into primary and secondary schools to equip younger generations with the skills for preventing and mediating disputes. To address resource-based conflicts, leaders from Acholi and Karamoja have engaged in discussions under the aegis of WPDI to establish cross-border resource agreements that promote cooperation over competition. Additionally, efforts to combat poverty have been prioritized, as economic hardship remains a significant driver of instability. Collaborative initiatives have been launched to foster economic growth and generate services in territories where they remain scarce, contributing to the overall fragility of the region.



Since its inception in Acholi in 2012, WPDI has remained committed to grassroots, community-driven development continually adapting and expanding its services and deepening their impact. Youth engagement has been a central focus, with 52 Youth Peacemakers and 476 local youths actively participating in community engagement and livelihood empowerment programs. The Community Learning Center (CLC) in Gulu has engaged 2,134 participants in cultural and awareness events and advocacy campaigns, strengthening the local capacity for self-sufficiency. WPDI's network of 528 peacemakers has played a crucial role in fostering dialogue and leadership training, reaching over 90,280 individuals through various community initiatives.

Furthermore, conflict resolution programs have been implemented in 60 schools, training more than 6,195 learners and teachers in peace education. Economic development has also remained a key component in our action, with 122 WPDI-incubated businesses benefiting over 7,290 individuals, providing tangible opportunities for financial stability and community growth. The progress made in 2024 reflects the impact of sustained investment in peace and development. As detailed in this report, WPDI remains dedicated to working alongside its partners, stakeholders, and the wider public to continue fostering stability, economic resilience, and a lasting culture of peace in the Acholi Sub-Region.



Key Achievements

Vectors of change

2,060

CLC visitors

52

Lead Youth
Peacemakers

476

Local Youth
Peacemakers

528

total Youth
Peacemakers

90,280

individuals
reached by Lead
Peacemakers

Peacebuilding at the CLC

503

CRE trainees

1,871

participants in Cinema
for Peace

2,134

participants in CLC
Advocacy campaigns

4,508

total beneficiaries from
peacebuilding initiatives

Peacebuilding in schools

60

schools hosting
WPDI programs

6,060

learners

135

parents, admin, and
teachers trained

16,447

people reached
through advocacy
campaigns in schools

22,507

total participants
in school-based
peacebuilding

Peacebuilding in the community

31

community
dialogues held

5,076

participants
in dialogues

106

local
leaders trained

5,182

total participants
in community-level
peacebuilding

Capacity-building at the CLC

542

ICT trainees

214

Entrepreneurship
trainees

176

Arts and
Crafts trainees

932

total trainees in
vocational courses

Income-generating projects

23

SMEs created in
2024

122

SMEs supported by
WPDI in total

1,323

jobs created

5,967

indirect beneficiaries
of businesses
(families)

7,290

beneficiaries of all
SMEs

Health and Wellbeing

252

Sexual and
Reproductive
Health
individual
beneficiaries

761

Sexual and
Reproductive
Health event
participants

370

Trauma Healing
individual
beneficiaries

220

Trauma
Healing event
participants

551

students
trained in SEL

2,154

total Health
and Wellbeing
participants

Peace Through Sports

16

teams managed by
WPDI

275

regular training
participants

25,000

participants in
competitions events

25,275

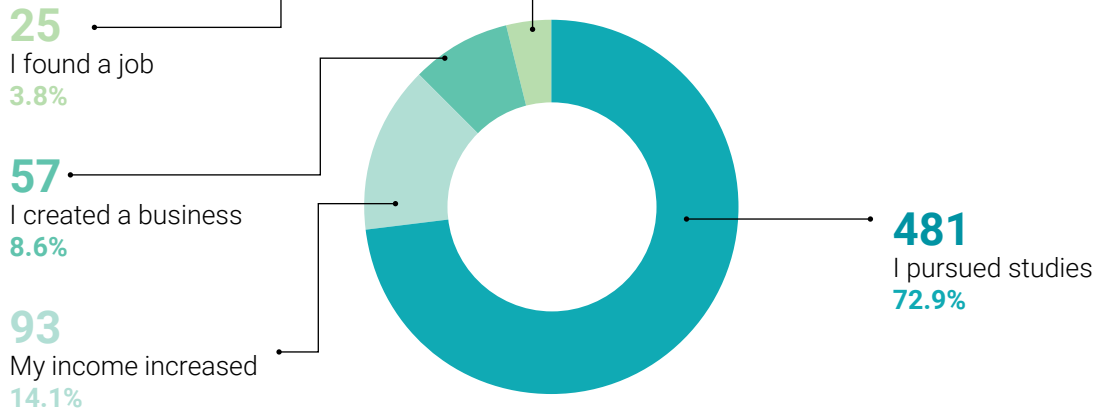
participants in all
sportive activities



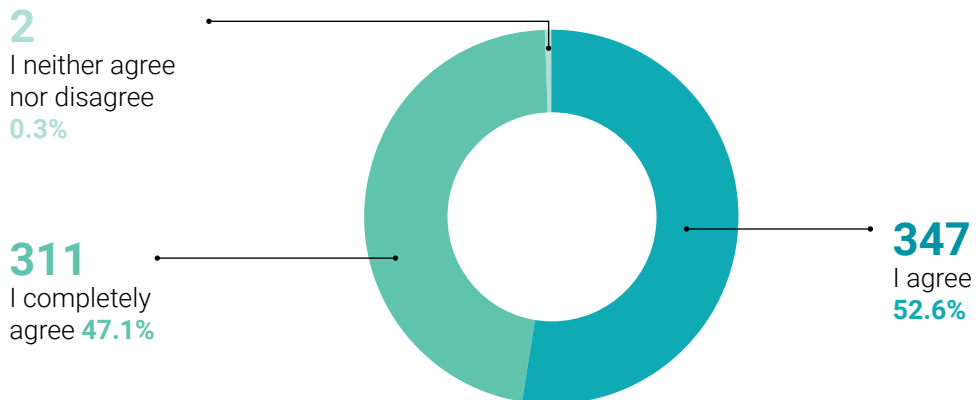
Survey Results

Out of 660 individuals surveyed, the following responses were collected.

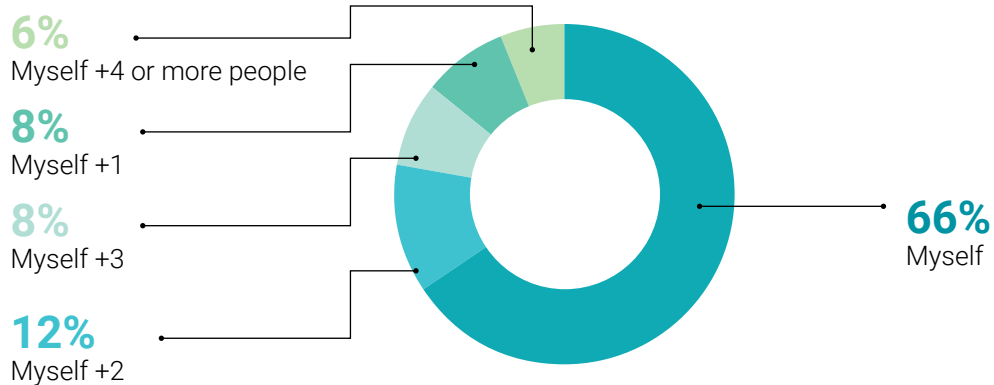
Has the program improved your career prospects?



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

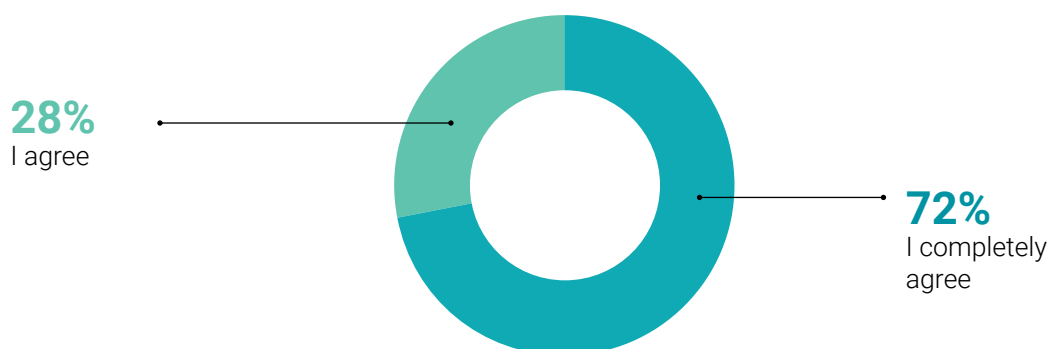


If this training has allowed you to increase your income, how many people do you support financially?

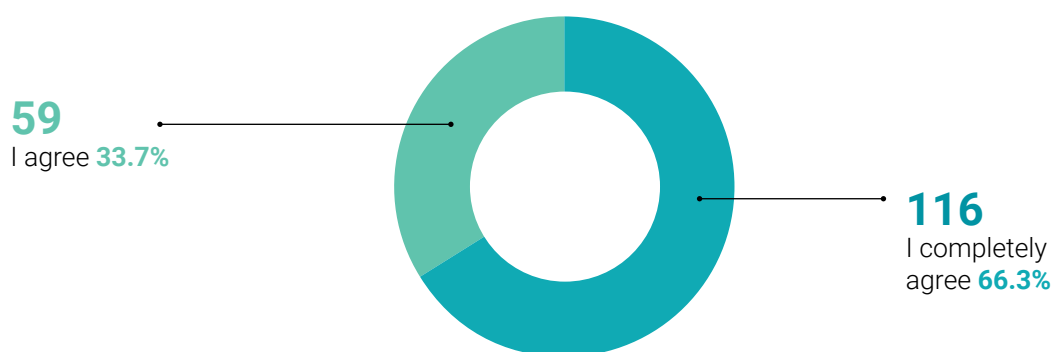


Out of 175 teachers, professors and educators surveyed, the following responses were collected about WPDl's Peace Education Program in Schools in the Acholi Sub-Region.

"The WPDl program is effectively teaching and promoting peaceful attitudes, self-discipline, nonviolence, and other civic mindsets?"



"The peace education program of WPDl is a useful contribution for preventing or addressing bullying and other forms of conflict and violence in school"



Feedback from Local and National Stakeholders



"From the office of the Gulu Deputy Resident District Commissioner (RDC), I want to acknowledge and commend the work of the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative, a partner for promotion of harmony in the areas of GBV and land-related disputes among empowering local leaders on disputes resolution.

The cooperation between the RDC office and yours has played key roles in the reduction of GBV and land conflict among the people of Gulu District. Together, we mediated several disputes and reorientated local leaders on their mandates, and this has yielded many in many areas with such disputes. I therefore pray that WPDI will continue and expand their projects that targets community mindset change among others for socio-economic transformation of Gulu District as well as the entire country."

James Cosmas Okidi,
Deputy Resident District Commissioner,
Gulu District



"I have participated in the number of activities organized by WPDI, i.e. Business idea vetting during Business Plan Competitions, the groups projects sites visit, and M & E. Am happy to say that the Whitaker Peace & Development initiative is changing lives and lifestyles of youths, children and women in my community through the multiple trainings and the start up capital grant support to groups. This is helping them generate money for supporting their families and causing development in their communities and also attaining skills of operating their projects profitably. My great thanks to the organization."

Lakwonyero Geoffrey,
The City Community Development
Officer of Gulu city



External Evaluation of WPDI's Peacebuilding Activities

In 2024, WPDI commissioned an external evaluation from the Kenya-based firm QDATAMS. They provided evaluation of the peacebuilding programs deployed in three sub-regions in Uganda and three others in South Sudan. Their report highlighted WPDI's significant impact in the Acholi Sub-Region. Some of their main findings were that:

- The project provided valuable insights for strengthening future peacebuilding and community development efforts.
- By empowering local individuals, particularly youth, and fostering a sense of ownership, the initiative ensured sustainability beyond external funding.
- Integrating peace education into school curriculums and after-school activities effectively reduced conflicts, demonstrating the role of education in conflict prevention.
- A holistic approach, combining peace education, vocational training, and health education, proved more effective than focusing on a single area, promoting long-term stability and resilience.

The evaluators stressed the central importance of youth empowerment in the project, particularly

among those most affected by conflict, such as former child soldiers, displaced youth, and refugees. The establishment of youth-led peace clubs, community learning centers, and mentorship programs fostered a culture of non-violence and civic responsibility, enabling young people to actively participate in peacebuilding efforts and contribute to lasting community stability.

The evaluation also found that WPDI's interventions improved discipline and academic performance in schools, strengthening relationships between students, parents, and educators. Community dialogue meetings helped shift mindsets, encouraging peaceful dispute resolution. Evaluators also collected feedback from stakeholders and beneficiaries reporting a decline in land conflicts due to WPDI's successful mediation efforts, while youth participation in structured peacebuilding activities contributed to reduced violence and greater social cohesion.

Overall, the findings underscored WPDI's role in fostering sustainable peace in the Acholi Sub-Region, noting that, equipping youth with essential skills, empowering local leaders, and strengthening community dialogue, WPDI has contributed to rebuilding trust and resilience in a region once deeply affected by conflict.





Vectors of Change

Mobilizing Youth Leaders to Drive Change at the Grassroots

52

**Lead
Youth Peacemakers**

476

**Local
Youth Peacemakers**

90,280

**individuals reached by
Lead Peacemakers**

Throughout 2024, a dedicated group of 52 Lead Youth Peacemakers, assisted by 476 local youths, implemented community initiatives on behalf of WPDI. These young leaders played a crucial role in advancing WPDI's interventions within their communities, taking on a wide range of responsibilities. Their work included mobilizing communities, delivering peacebuilding and business training, conducting advocacy campaigns, facilitating dialogues on pressing social issues, and providing psychosocial support to those in need.

Over the year, the Youth Peacemakers actively participated in key awareness events organized by WPDI, such as International Women's Day, the Day of the African Child, International Peace Day, International Youth Day, the UN Day commemoration, and the 16 Days of Activism Against gender-based violence. Among these initiatives, the mental health awareness marathon stood out as a significant event. Additionally, they conducted Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) training sessions in primary and secondary schools across the region, complementing these efforts with advocacy campaigns focused on children's wellbeing and education. They also facilitated training sessions

for community leaders and organized dialogues to address conflicts affecting local communities. One of the most significant achievements of the year was the resolution of a long-standing land dispute, facilitated by WPDI in collaboration with the Office of the Deputy Resident District Commissioner (DRDC). The conflict, which had persisted for over three years, had led to homes being burned and numerous police reports being filed. When the issue was brought to WPDI's attention by local leaders, the organization engaged Youth Peacemakers and community mediators from Gulu District to intervene. By September, after extensive dialogue and negotiation, the two communities agreed to have their land boundary formally demarcated. The outcome of the mediation process led to several key resolutions. Some parties reached a mutual agreement, which was filed with the LC3 court as a Consent Judgment.

The reception from local communities was overwhelmingly positive. Through surveys and testimonials, project participants and stakeholders were able to share their experiences, reinforcing the importance of community engagement in shaping WPDI's interventions.





"I was part of this landmark history for mediation and demarcation, and I would like to thank WPMI for the wonderful work they have done in the community and as the representative from the office of the president of the Republic of Uganda, I would like to commend you for the job well done and promoting peaceful avenues, hence prosperity within our communities."

James Cosmas Okidi,
Deputy Resident District Commissioner,
Gulu District



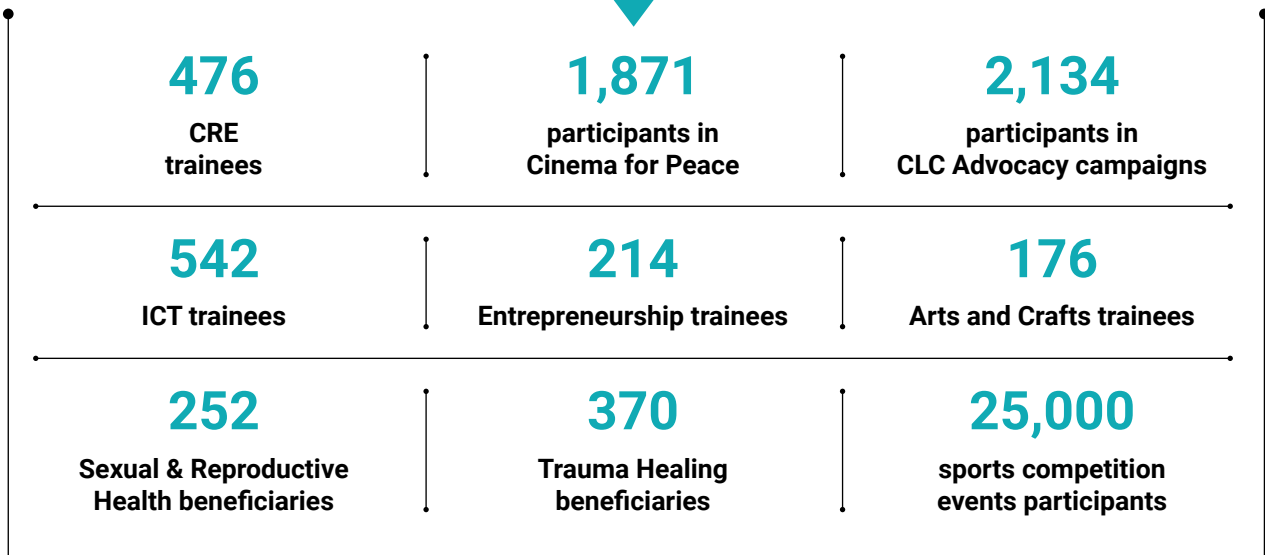
"I was among the beneficiaries for the community leaders training cohort 2024, the skills I acquired, I mediated over 11 cases within the community and resolved cases related to land disputes. Finally, I would like to commend WPMI for this wonderful work and dedication to ensure that our community is at peace. Thank you so much for the great work."

Mego Alok Margret,
Community Dialogue Participant



Improving Local Access to Skills, Knowledge and Connectivity through a Community Learning Center

People reached through CLC activities



WPDI's Community Learning Center (CLC), located in Gulu City, has continued to serve as a vital hub for education, peacebuilding, and community engagement. In 2024, the center welcomed over 2,060 visitors who benefited from its free resources, including a well-equipped library and complimentary internet access.

At the CLC, technology and vocational training played a crucial role in empowering individuals with new skills. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) courses benefited 542 participants, providing them with essential digital literacy skills. Additionally, 176 individuals took part in Arts and Crafts workshops, while 214 engaged in Business and Entrepreneurship training programs, equipping them with entrepreneurial knowledge to enhance their economic stability. The CLC also offers a range of certified courses in Conflict Resolution, Human Rights, Trauma Healing, and Peace Through Sports. Additionally, it serves as a venue for advocacy campaigns, providing meeting spaces and hosting indoor screenings for Cinema for Peace. The center's impact extends beyond WPDI programs, as external partners such as the Uganda Business and Technical Examination Board and the God Hershel Organization (GHO) utilize its training facilities for specialized programs, further strengthening its role as a community resource for learning and development.

A key milestone for 2024 was the hosting at the CLC of the Grant Agreement Signing with the groups that recently joined our business incubator. The document seals the terms of the relationship that we will maintain over the incubation period of their business venture, ensuring transparency and proper management of funds, which is key for the effectiveness and the credibility of the program. More generally, the ceremony marked an important step toward sustainable local initiatives that will contribute to the vibrancy of the district.





Peacebuilding as Grassroots Empowerment

Mediation Among Community Members

Community Dialogues for Sowing Seeds of Peace

5,182 total participants in community-level peacebuilding

31

community dialogues held

5,076

participants in dialogues

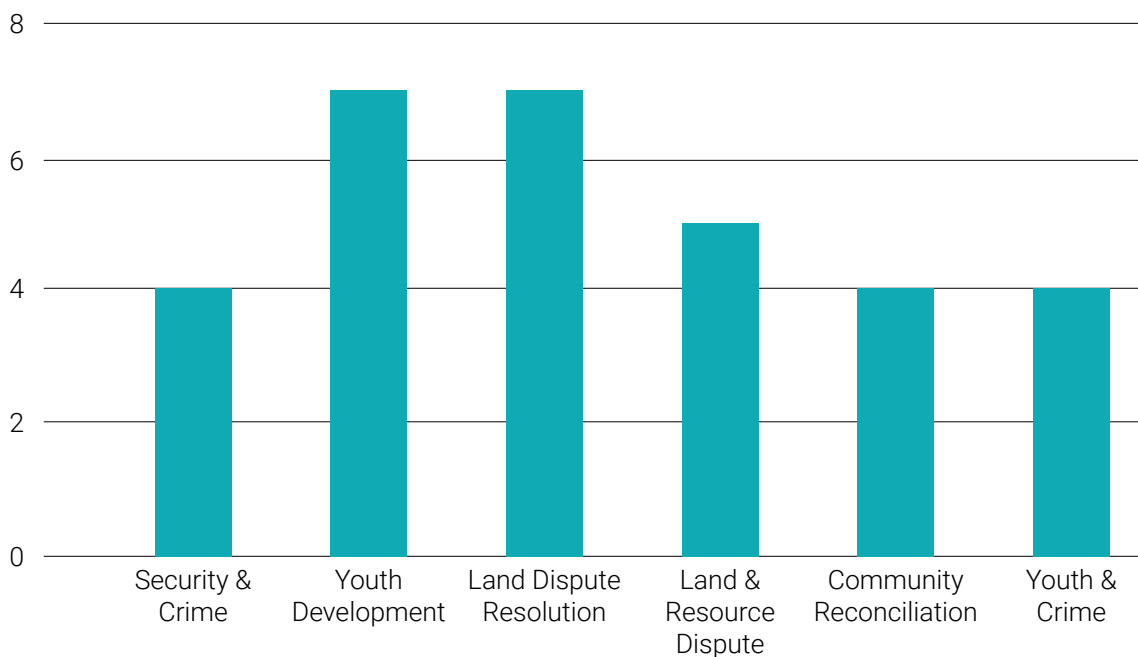
106

local leaders trained

To help communities address their conflicts, WPDI has developed a strategic platform, the community dialogues, which is a tool for resolving discords in a peaceful way. These dialogues take place at the county level, allowing for an in-depth analysis

of conflict drivers while encouraging young men and women to embrace peaceful coexistence. Additionally, interethnic group discussions are held to foster understanding and unity among members from different communities.

Themes addressed during the 31 community dialogues



In 2024, 31 dialogues focused on key issues such as land disputes, and violence. Seven dialogues also included gender issues as a sub-theme focusing on gender-based violence, school dropouts and early marriages. Throughout the year, WPDl engaged 5,076 community members who participated in open discussions with local leaders, identifying the root causes of their challenges and

developing solutions without external influence. This community-led approach ensures that conflicts are addressed at the Sub-County level under the guidance of local leaders. The insights gathered from these discussions will further inform inter-district peace dialogues, strengthening long-term conflict resolution efforts and promoting sustainable harmony within communities.



Roseline, the Youth Peacemaker who helped abate a conflict initiated before she was born

Context

A land conflict that was brought to WPDI's attention when Roseline, a Youth Peacemaker, was invited by local leaders after they heard her speak on conflict resolution during a radio program on Radio Tembo in Kitgum District. The dispute, dating back to 1979, involved two villages from different parishes—Nanjaret Village in Lumule Parish, Kitgum Matidi Sub-County, and Lukira Village in Lukwor Parish, Labongo Amida East Sub-County. The conflict arose when a resident of Nanjaret, Kolo, attempted to fence a boundary, but the community suspected him of having ulterior motives. During the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency, displacement led to further tensions as residents of Lukira began encroaching beyond the original boundary.



WPDI's intervention

Despite multiple interventions by local authorities, including LCIII, LCII, LCI, LCV, and Sub-County chiefs, the issue remained unresolved. In 2023, the dispute escalated to the high court. However, after reviewing the case, WPDI collaborated with the RDC's office and the LC5 of Kitgum, leading the magistrate to recommend mediation at the community level. Throughout early 2024, continuous meetings and negotiations took place, with Roseline playing a crucial role in facilitating discussions.

Resolutions

Eventually, both communities reached an agreement, leading to the successful demarcation of the boundary. WPDI staff and Youth Peacemakers conducted eight follow-ups, with a total of 800 participants (238 women and 562 men) attending the dialogue meetings. Roseline's dedication and persistence were instrumental in resolving the conflict, as she tirelessly led the mediation efforts, ensuring a peaceful and lasting resolution.





"I am impressed with WPDI's approach to community promotion of peaceful coexistence. We have had a lot of gender-based violence in this area and are concerned because we lost four mothers. So we brought it to the attention of the leaders and Youth Peacemakers immediately and interventions took place. Police posts were erected in Lii and also women and men trained. Thank you WPDI."

Am Mego Alok,
Stella from Lil District



"I am deeply grateful for the dedication of WPDI and its staff to ensure peace between our two communities. Even the local leaders had lost hope, with some fearing that mediation would not succeed. However, thanks to WPDI's unwavering commitment, court cases were withdrawn, the two communities came together and land boundaries were successfully demarcated. Today, we stand as a living example of peaceful coexistence. My heartfelt appreciation goes out to the community members, leaders, and WPDI for making this possible. As the Youth Peacemaker coordinating the dialogue, I want to personally thank WPDI for the opportunity and the immense efforts made from 2022 to 2024 to bring a lasting resolution to this dispute. This achievement has been a milestone for my community, earning us respect and reinforcing our commitment to peace. I am proud to witness the positive change, and I am certain that the knowledge and support provided by WPDI have been instrumental in fostering this harmony. Thanks to WPDI, our community now stands united in peace."

Odur John Kennneth Wod Pa Jakaliya,
Youth Peacemaker



Training Community Leaders to Cultivate Peace

In 2024, WPDI trained 106 community leaders in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and Human Rights, equipping them with the skills needed to mediate daily conflicts and advocate for sustainable peace and development within their communities. These trained leaders have since, in turn, reached and trained additional community leaders, amplifying the impact of WPDI's initiatives. By empowering community leaders, WPDI is not only addressing immediate conflicts but also fostering a long-term culture of peace and constructive dialogue. This proactive approach significantly influences community development, steering it toward greater cooperation and stability. These leaders play a crucial role in strengthening local capacity for conflict resolution, promoting Human Rights, and advocating for the protection of vulnerable community members.

The training sessions focused on key issues affecting peaceful coexistence, including land conflicts, gender-based violence, school dropouts, political disputes, and school-related challenges. The impact of these efforts has been profound. The training has helped shape community attitudes and behaviors toward peace, equipping leaders with the skills to mediate disputes, negotiate effectively, and maintain harmony within their communities. Leaders trained in conflict resolution have also become adept at identifying early warning signs of disputes, allowing them to intervene swiftly and prevent minor disagreements from escalating into larger conflicts.



"I want to sincerely thank WPD for organizing such valuable training sessions in Omoro District. Our community has been struggling with numerous land disputes between clans, as well as high school dropout rates due to early marriages, teenage pregnancies, and forced marriages. The knowledge and skills we have gained from this training will be instrumental in addressing these pressing challenges. I urge WPD to continue organizing similar training sessions to help resolve conflict-related issues within our community."

Akwero Jennifer,
Community Leader



Conflict Resolution Skills for Everyone in the Community

503

**Conflict Resolution Education
trainees**

1,871

**participants in Cinema for
Peace**

2,134

**participants in CLC Advocacy
campaigns**

Conflict Resolution Education

The Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) training remains one of the most valued programs offered by WPDI in Gulu City, attracting civically minded individuals eager to apply their skills in fostering peace. Tailored to address the region's unique challenges, particularly insecurity caused by frequent cattle raids, the course equips participants with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively de-escalate conflicts. Delivered by WPDI's expert Trainers and Youth Peacemakers, the training takes place both at the Community Learning Center (CLC) and within the broader community, ensuring accessibility and impact. For 2024, 503

learners graduated from the CLC in Gulu City with certifications in CRE. The impact of this training extends beyond the classroom, as participants gain a deeper understanding of the root causes of conflict, allowing them to address the underlying issues rather than merely managing their symptoms. Many have experienced profound personal transformations, not only in their ability to navigate social interactions but also in other aspects of their lives, contributing to a more peaceful and resilient community.



Cinema for Peace

The initiative engages communities through film screenings that sparked discussions on key social issues, promoted peace, and encouraged reflection on cultural and societal values. By showcasing carefully selected films, the program raised awareness on topics such as conflict resolution, unity, and social justice while providing a platform for meaningful dialogue. Each screening was followed by a discussion session, where participants collectively reflected on the film's messages and explored ways to apply these lessons in their own lives and communities. In 2024, the initiative reached 1,871 participants, fostering active engagement and deeper understanding of peacebuilding efforts.

Topics discussed included:

- Overcoming Adversity and the Importance of Perseverance
- Cultural Identity
- Heritage
- Unity and the Effects of Conflict
- Justice
- Integrity and the Power of Group
- Importance of Unity in Times of Conflict



Watching the film and discussing it with the group opened my eyes to how powerful forgiveness can be. I learned that unity is key to overcoming past struggles, both on a personal level and in society. The film shows how deeply rooted conflicts can affect individuals and communities, but through understanding, dialogue, and reconciliation, healing is possible. The film reminded me that regardless of the challenges we face, coming together as one and forgiving each other is essential for moving forward and creating a peaceful future."

Rubangakene Michael,
Cinema for Peace participant



"The movie was eye-opening. It showed me how important it is to think critically and stand up for what's right, even when faced with opposition. It's something I'll carry with me in my daily life."

Akello Susan,
Cinema for Peace participant



Advocacy Campaigns around the Community Learning Center and in schools

2,134

**participants in CLC
Advocacy campaigns**

16,447

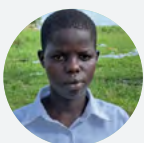
**people reached through
advocacy campaigns in schools**

The youth of the communities where WPDl is active are often faced with a wide array of challenges for which they lack opportunities for information and exchange, including limited social inclusion, restricted access to decision-making, and barriers to enjoy their basic Human Rights. To address these issues, WPDl organizes advocacy campaigns, to inspire, empower, and equip young people to become advocates for peace and Human Rights. These initiatives are usually held in the context of cultural events and national and international observances, particularly UN Days, to ensure that the campaigns are fully integrated to the life of the community, which facilitates their local appropriation. They are delivered by our network of peacemakers, supported by students when the campaign is in school, and by local youths when the campaign is delivered in, or around the CLC.

Throughout the year, the campaigns provided a platform for young people to voice their concerns and aspirations on critical social issues, including

teenage pregnancy, school dropout, substance abuse, early marriage, violence, conflict, gender-based violence, and child labor. The campaigns were tailored to suit each community's context, delivering awareness-raising messages through dance, drama, flyers, and posters, while women's groups gave presentations in their villages. In Kitgum and other districts within Acholi, group discussions engaged entire communities in conversations about school dropout rates and teenage pregnancy.

One of the most notable successes of these campaigns was their multi-generational engagement. Parents and children actively participated in discussions, helping to bridge generational gaps and enhance collective awareness. By fostering dialogue and encouraging community involvement, these advocacy efforts have played a significant role in promoting peace, social development, and inclusion.



"The advocacy campaign conducted in my school was so beneficial, it gave us the opportunity to discuss issues that affect our wellbeing in school as students. Through an advocacy campaign we reached solutions to these problems."

Akello Monivesta,
student from St. Teresa of Calcutta Secondary School



Bringing Skills and Values for Peace Into Schools

22,642 total participants in school-based peacebuilding

60

**schools hosting
WPDI programs**

6,060

**learners trained
in CRE**

135

**parents,
administrative staff,
and teachers trained**

16,447

**people reached
through advocacy
campaigns in schools**

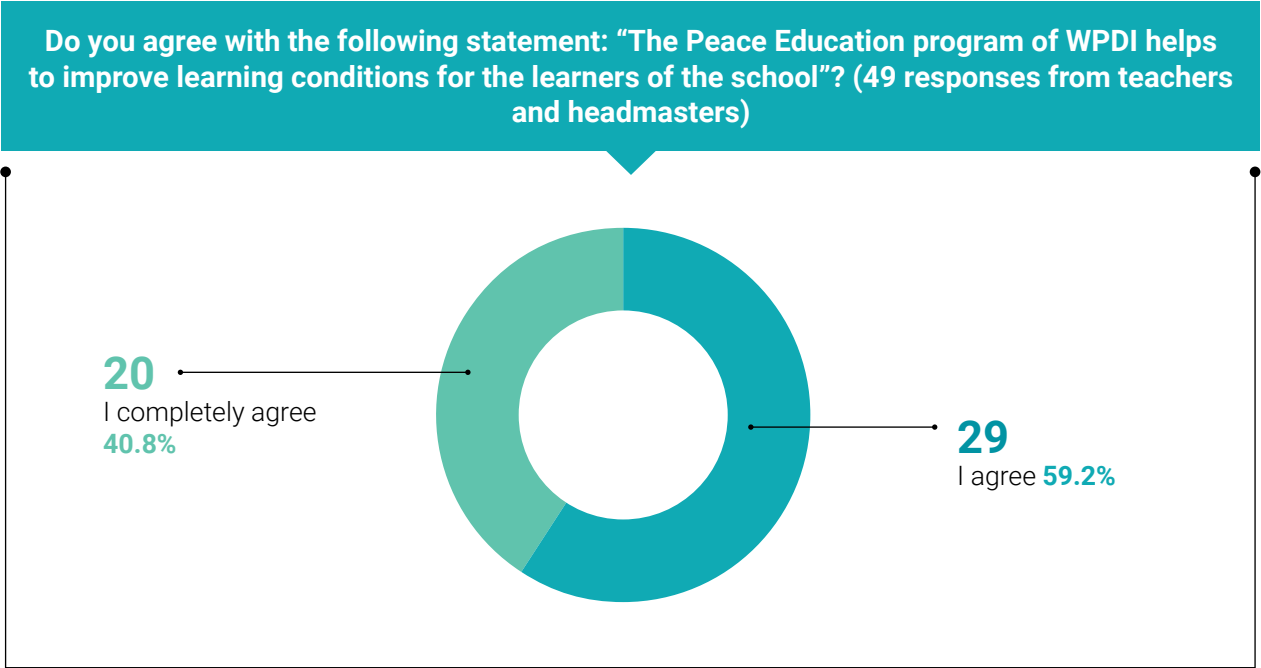
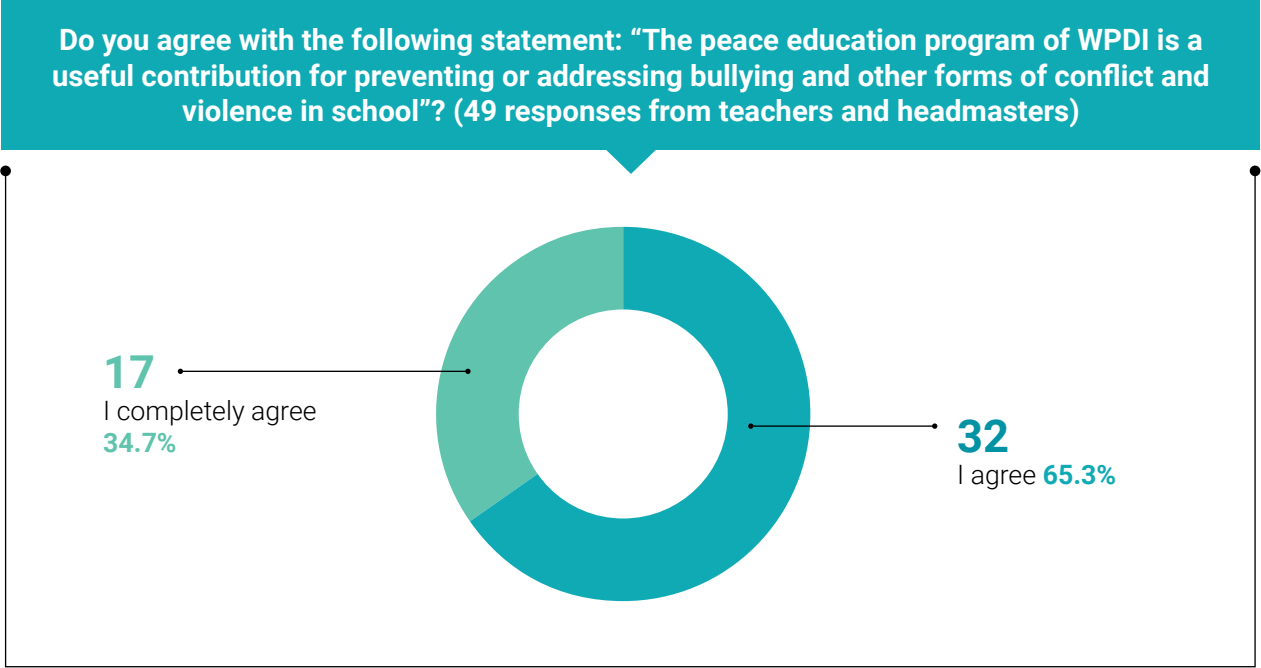
The core belief of WPDI is that peace is always more than the absence of conflict. Genuine peace stems from what UNESCO has termed a culture of peace, that is a set of values, attitudes and behaviors conducive to the practice of tolerance and dialogue. Engaging on the path of such a culture is critical for fragile communities to regain their resilience capacity. To this effect, education is the most effective conduit that can be employed, hence the Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) program that WPDI has been implementing in schools of the Acholi Sub-Region for the past decade. By integrating peace education into school curricula, we are not only teaching students about peace but also empowering them to actively foster it. In other words, since everyone has a stake in peace, everyone should have the capacity to protect and promote it: peace is a skill, a civic skill. This is a

truth of which the communities of the Acholi Sub-Region are aware: even 20 years after the end of the civil war, the memory of the violence and especially of the thousands of children forced into the Lord's Resistance Army as soldiers, is still raw, notably because many of these children were abducted from their very schools. To heal such scars and prepare for a future of reconciled communities, it is indeed indispensable to disseminate the culture of peace in schools. In this respect, it is important to note that the program is designed to have a multiplier effect, since the 6,060 students who participate directly in the training are expected to practice and showcase its values in their schools everyday. This is for example the case of the peer mediation programs that have been established across the 60 schools that have been in partnership with us this year.



To assess these more qualitative outcomes of its peace education program, WPDl conducts surveys among teachers, administrators and parents of our partner schools. In a survey conducted between 2023 and 2024, within school communities of Acholi where WPDl runs peace education programs, 49 educators at 12 schools provided feedback on these activities. 100% of them agreed on the affirmation that ‘the program of WPDl is effectively teaching

and promoting peaceful attitudes, self-discipline, nonviolence, and other civic mindsets’. 100% of them agreed that ‘the peace education program of WPDl 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 WPDl helps to improve learning conditions for the learners of the school’.





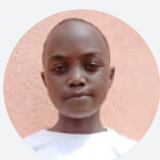
"Before I attended the CRE class by WPDI, I used to segregate in terms of tribes. I always wanted to associate with my tribe mates and hated other tribes but after this training, and especially the topic of Identity, I learned how to appreciate our differences because it is what makes us special."

Kakanyero Nathan Ian,
student from Vanguard Primary School



"Before the CRE training, whenever I saw my fellow students having conflicts I always wanted to help them but I didn't know the right approach to use and I could end up being biased instead of assisting them. However, after attending the CRE training, I have been able to mediate conflict among my fellow students in class, and this could have not been possible without the knowledge on peer mediation that I learned from WPDI."

Lakica Sandra,
student from St. Mary's College Lacor



"Before the peacebuilding training, I was one of the most stubborn students in school and at home as a child. I never listened to my parents' instructions as I always wanted to do what pleased me. After the training, I realized all these bad behaviours had negatively impacted my life, and I decided to change. My class performance has since then improved and I am a well-behaved student in my school and at home."

Akena Ray,
student from Anaka Integrated Secondary School



Restoring Trust through Revived Parent-Teacher Engagement at Lumule Primary School

The disconnect between teachers and parents was affecting pupils

For over six years, Lumule Primary School had not held a single parent-teacher meeting, as parents had vowed never to attend any gathering organized by the head teacher or staff. This deep-rooted disconnect stemmed from miscommunication around academic results, school land issues, and lack of appropriate responses to concerns raised. This had led to declining academic performance, a high dropout rate, and a strained relationship between educators and the community, leaving teachers in constant fear.

The start of collaborative discussions for peacebuilding

In an effort to bridge this gap, WPDI organized an advocacy campaign in the form of an Annual General Meeting, acting as an independent mediator. For the first time in six years, every parent attended the meeting, resulting in a peaceful and collaborative discussion.

The transformative power of dialogue in schools

Since then, the relationship between parents and the school has significantly improved, fostering a supportive learning environment and enhancing student performance. "This has truly transformed our school community," says Anyono Roseline, Mediator.



Training School Teachers in Conflict Resolution Education

If the culture of peace is to become part and parcel of the school culture, the engagement of the adults of the school community must be an integral dimension of the CRE program in schools, starting with teachers, who must be a foundation for the sustainability of this initiative. To this effect, the CRE teacher-training was conducted in schools where

WPD's Peace Education Program is implemented. The training aimed to enhance teachers' capacity in conflict resolution and transformative peacebuilding, equipping them with the skills to effectively manage school-related conflicts and contribute to peace within their communities. 135 teachers were trained in conflict resolution.



"Being part of the CRE training at my school transformed my life positively. I learned different approaches to conflict resolution and how to manage emotions. With these skills, I feel empowered and confident to handle challenging situations without fear."

Achen Esther Opio,
teacher at Puranga Secondary school



"After the WPD CRE training, I gained a deeper understanding of leadership. My management style and relationship with my staff have significantly improved. I now actively listen to the teachers and work collaboratively to find solutions. This training has made me a better administrator."

Ojok Robert,
headteacher of ABC Primary School Rackoko



Transforming School Culture: How the Anaka Integrated Secondary School requested WPDI to restore peace in its midst

High School Dropout Rates due to Bullying and Indiscipline

The Anaka Integrated Secondary School, one of the leading schools in Nwoya District, serves a diverse student population of approximately 1,500, with 60 privately hired teachers. Persistent bullying and indiscipline, stemming from cultural differences and varied upbringings, led to a high dropout rate, tarnishing the school's reputation and negatively impacting academic performance. Concerned about this growing crisis, the school administration sought support from WPDI through its lead youth peacemaker, requesting Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) training for teachers.

Teacher-Student Relationships Improves Following WPDI Training

Once the training was conducted, equipping teachers with peacebuilding and conflict resolution skills, the school environment transformed. Teacher-student relationships

improved, bullying significantly declined, and students felt safer and more supported. With the introduction of the CRE program, teachers and students actively enrolled in peacebuilding training, fostering a culture of mutual respect and collaboration. As a result, school enrollment reached new heights, academic performance improved, and Anaka Integrated Secondary School regained its standing as one of the most respected institutions in the district.

The Headteacher Praises the Peacebuilding Program

"We appreciate WPDI for bringing the peacebuilding program to our school and enriching both teachers and students with invaluable skills in conflict resolution," says Olango Paul, Headteacher of Anaka Integrated Secondary School. "This training has restored peace, increased academic performance, and rebuilt trust among parents and educational stakeholders in Nwoya District."





Livelihood: Opportunities for Socio- Economic Empowerment

Vocational skills are essential for personal career growth and community development, especially in fragile contexts where poverty and instability reinforce each other. Many young people in the region face significant challenges, including limited access to formal education, leaving them vulnerable to unemployment and economic hardship. To help break these cycles, WPDI has put in place vocational training programs that provide practical skills, startup grants, and extend into business incubation services, enabling individuals to transform opportunities for peace into economic progress. These programs are founded on the principle that sustainable development and stability go hand in hand, equipping participants with the necessary tools to enhance their employability or establish their own enterprises.

Every year WPDI conducts post-training surveys to better understand the outcome of the training for graduates. Out of 256 individuals surveyed, the following responses were collected.

Vocational Skills for Personal and Career Development

932 total trainees in vocational courses

542
ICT trainees

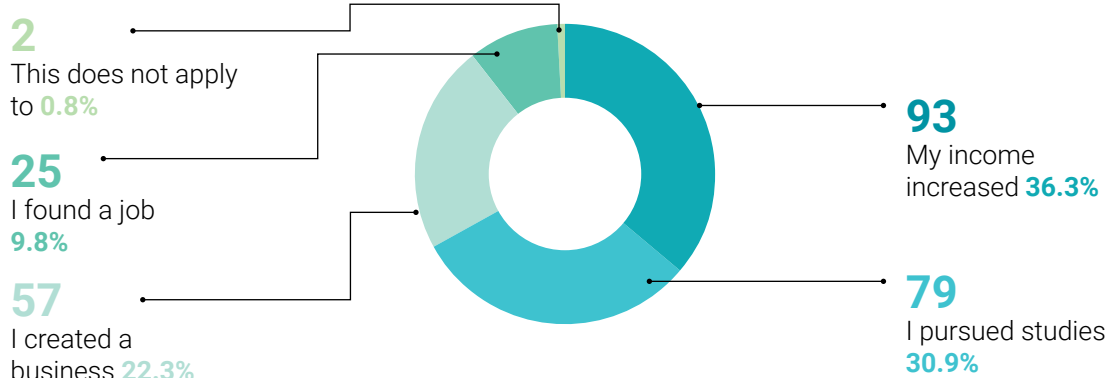
214
Entrepreneurship trainees

176
Arts and Crafts trainees

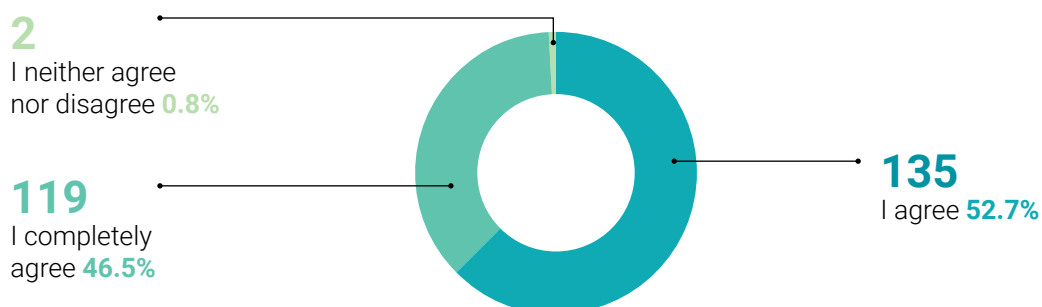
Expanding access to vocational training ensures that more individuals gain the knowledge and confidence needed to secure sustainable livelihoods. The rising number of trainees in fields such as ICT, entrepreneurship, and Arts and Crafts highlights the increasing demand for diverse skill sets in today's

job market. By fostering economic self-sufficiency, vocational education not only improves personal economic prospects but also contributes to the long-term stability and growth of the Acholi Sub-Region, empowering individuals to shape a better future for themselves and their communities.

Has the program improved your career prospects? (Vocational trainees only)



"I have been able to apply the knowledge and skills learned from WPDI in my personal or professional life" (Vocational trainees only)



Information and Communication Technologies

WPDI has been offering its certified Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) training at the CLC for many years, with the aim of equipping individuals of the Acholi Sub-Region with essential digital skills. In today's increasingly digitized world, access to technology and the ability to navigate it are crucial for personal and professional growth. The program has helped bridge the digital divide by providing participants with the capacity to use ICT in their daily lives, be it for professional or personal purposes.

The ICT curriculum included basic computer skills, such as understanding operating systems and working with word processors and spreadsheets. Participants learned internet and email basics, including how to navigate online resources and use email for communication. Cybersecurity awareness is another key component of the program,

focusing on safe browsing practices and password management. Additionally, the training introduced social media for community engagement, teaching participants how to promote sports events and connect with their communities. Digital content creation was also emphasized, equipping trainees with the skills to create and edit simple sports-related content using basic video and photo editing tools.

By the end of the program, 542 participants successfully completed the training and received certificates recognizing their newly acquired digital skills. Thus, ICT training sessions have significantly contributed to digital literacy, empowering participants to navigate the digital world with confidence and make a positive impact in their communities.



"This training has opened new doors for our team. We can now share our events on social media, and we've learned how to stay safe online. I believe these skills will help us connect with other teams and grow our community."

Okello Jildo,
soccer player and ICT trainee





"Before the training, I didn't know how to use a computer much, but now I feel confident navigating the internet. It's great to have these skills, especially in managing our team's social media accounts and promoting our games!"

Otim Solomon,
soccer player and ICT trainee



ICT programs for children to learn about coding

In partnership with Ericsson, we have launched a program designed to empower children with a variety of courses that foster their creativity and coding skills. This holiday season, we introduced a Game Development Course to help children explore the basics of coding and game design.

Looking ahead, we are excited to announce that in 2025, we will be expanding the program to

include Robotics and Electronics courses. Using the Spike Kit and Electkits, children will have the opportunity to dive deeper into the world of robotics, circuits, and automation.

In December, we were thrilled to see 20 children benefit from the program. However, due to the limited number of kits available, we were only able to accommodate this group.



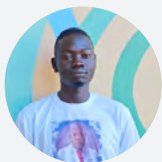
Business and Entrepreneurship

The training program was designed to equip youth and women with essential business and leadership skills to foster entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and improve career prospects. This training plays a crucial role in educating youth and women on effective business management strategies, resource optimization for income generation, and leadership development. It empowers them to manage group dynamics effectively, resolve internal conflicts, and maintain harmony within their business teams. The basic-level training focuses on poverty awareness, personal development, business identification, idea generation, and screening for the best business concepts. The intermediate-level training covers key business management topics, including marketing and market analysis, financial management, record keeping, risk management, business structures, business ethics and social responsibility, and business plan development. Additionally, the training helps participants mobilize funds to start

their businesses either by supporting them through WPDI's Business Bootcamp or by preparing them to seek financial support from government entities, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

In 2024, a total of 214 participants registered for training at the CLC across two cohorts. The certificates awarded to the graduates strengthen their resumes and give them access to WPDI Business Plan Competitions, which will present them with new opportunities for learning, including the preparation of well-structured and -designed written and oral presentations. This is to say that, at every one of its stages, our comprehensive training program is a vital step towards empowering future leaders and entrepreneurs of the Acholi Sub-region.





"I was lucky to be a youth who participated in the business skills training during the first cohort of 2024. I also took part in the business plan design and group dynamics training, and my group, Lacan Pe Kun Produce Dealers, was fortunate to win a grant through the competition. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity because I believe that once we launch our business, our lives will improve significantly. Before this training, I had very little knowledge about essential business practices such as effective communication, record keeping, financial management, and risk assessment. Through WPDI's program, I have gained these crucial skills and now feel confident in operating a business successfully. Additionally, I have learned how to develop strong, fundable business plans and manage group dynamics effectively. I sincerely thank WPDI for the impactful work they are doing to transform the lives of youth and women in Northern Uganda."

Okumu Ronald,
Business trainee



"I am a member of GOLAN Concrete Dealers, and I want to express my deep appreciation to WPDI for the incredible work they are doing. As human beings, we all have different perspectives and ways of seeing things. This training came at the right time, though I wish I had received it even earlier. It has taught me the importance of embracing one another, accepting our weaknesses, and growing together as a team. By learning how to navigate diversity and resolve conflicts constructively, we can ensure the success and sustainability of our businesses. Thank you, WPDI."

Brenda Lakica,
Business trainee



Arts and Crafts

The WPDI Arts and Crafts program is designed to nurture creativity and provide participants with the skills to create and market their handmade products. The trainees were introduced to a wide array of topics designed to enhance their skills and creativity. In the Arts and Crafts program, they explored orientation, color theory, and the intricacies of making liquid soap, tablet mats, beaded bags, beaded purses, laundry soap, and various knitted and crocheted bags. They also learned the art of tie and dye, local bag weaving, and crafted earrings,

necklaces, craft shoes, door mats, t-shirts, and accessories such as bangles and bracelets.

In tailoring, the trainees received thorough training in machine introduction, installation, and operation, learning how to sew office wear, gardash dresses, flair dresses, skirts and blouses, shirts, and shorts. The program equipped them with both practical skills and creative techniques for a wide range of craft and tailoring professions. 176 trainees enrolled and graduated from the course.



"I dropped out of school in senior year because my mother could no longer afford the school fees after my father passed away. I first heard about the training from a neighbor who was attending a business skills course at WPDI, and I decided to follow her. Since I've always had a strong passion for fashion, I registered and attended classes. I'm a fast learner, and with my interest in fashion, I quickly picked up a variety of skills and designs during the tailoring training. Although the course isn't complete yet, I've already learned so much, like how to identify and adjust parts of a sewing machine, how to measure and cut dresses for both children and adults. In fact, I've already sewn three beautiful dresses, one for myself and two for my younger sister. I'm hopeful that I will be able to make money during the upcoming festive season. I'm truly grateful to WPDI for giving me such a wonderful opportunity."

Apio Shalom,
Arts and Crafts trainee from Ariaga



"I originally come from Oyam District, but I moved to Gulu City specifically to participate in the WPDI Arts and Crafts training. In my younger years, I served as a soldier, but an injury to my leg from that time made life difficult. I could no longer dig in the garden to provide for my wife and children. However, I'm grateful to WPDI for giving me the opportunity to learn new skills for free, which has restored my hope. Now, I can create products like purses, yarn bags, beaded bags, earrings, necklaces, liquid soap, and much more. I feel so much happier and more alive than I did before. The frustrations that once weighed me down are gone, and I finally feel valuable to myself and my family. I'm working hard towards my dream of opening a school in my village, where I can pass on the skills I've gained, as well as establishing my own workshop to produce and sell items. This experience has truly transformed my life."

Samuel Onyango,
Arts and Crafts trainee



Inzikuru Doris' story of knitting, networking and learning for a better future

Reentering the workforce by learning new skills

My name is Inzikuru Doris, I am 26 years old, and I live with my auntie. Originally, I come from the West Nile region in Arua. Before joining the Arts and Crafts program, I faced many challenges, including unemployment, the frustration of being dependent at my age, and depression. However, everything changed when a friend who had attended the WPD I Arts and Crafts program told

Becoming a successful business owner

My dream is to take all the skills I've learned and become a hands-on skills trainer back in Arua. Currently, I make crocheted and knitted bags and sell them around Gulu. Though I don't have a shop yet, I market my products through social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook. Thanks to this, I've gained customers as far as Arua, and I'm excited about the Christmas season as I expect to earn more. Previously, I made between 150,000 to 200,000 shillings, but now I'm earning at least 300,000 to 390,000 shillings, and I'm confident that the demand for my bags will continue to grow. WPD I has provided me with valuable, hands-on training, and I'm using those skills to support myself and my family.

Before joining the program, I was frustrated and had to depend on my aunt for even the smallest

me about it. Since enrolling in April, I've learned a lot, including how to make liquid soap, bar soap, door mats, table mats, stylish earrings, necklaces, beaded bags, and purses. These skills have not only boosted my confidence but also enabled me to provide for my family's basic needs. I'm now even enrolled in the tailoring course that started in August and am excited to keep learning new, life-changing skills.



things. Now, I feel empowered and independent. I'm no longer lonely, thanks to the many friends I've made during my training, which has also helped me. I'm always happy, and I look forward to what the future holds.

Supporting Income-Generating Projects

7,290 total beneficiaries of all SMEs

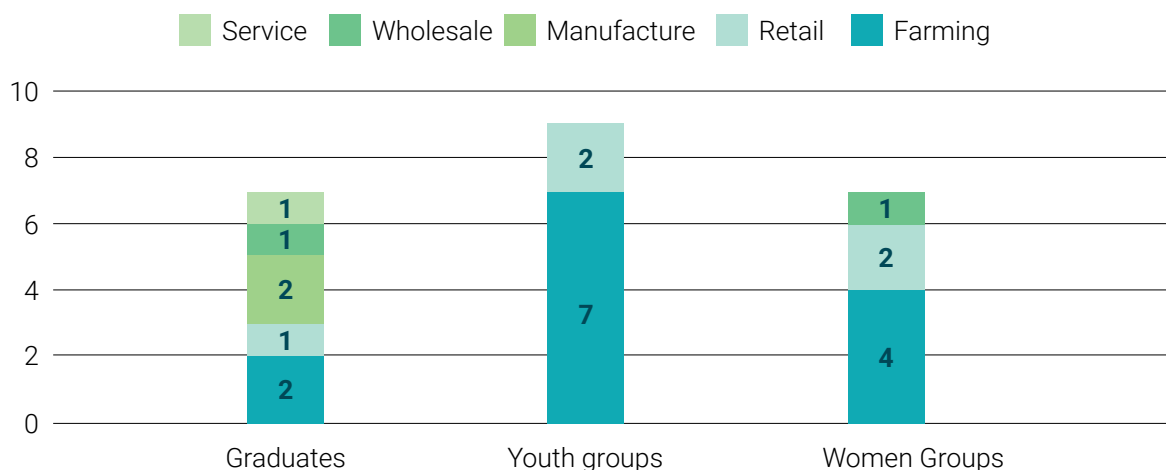
23
SMEs created in
2024

122
SMEs supported by
WPDI in total

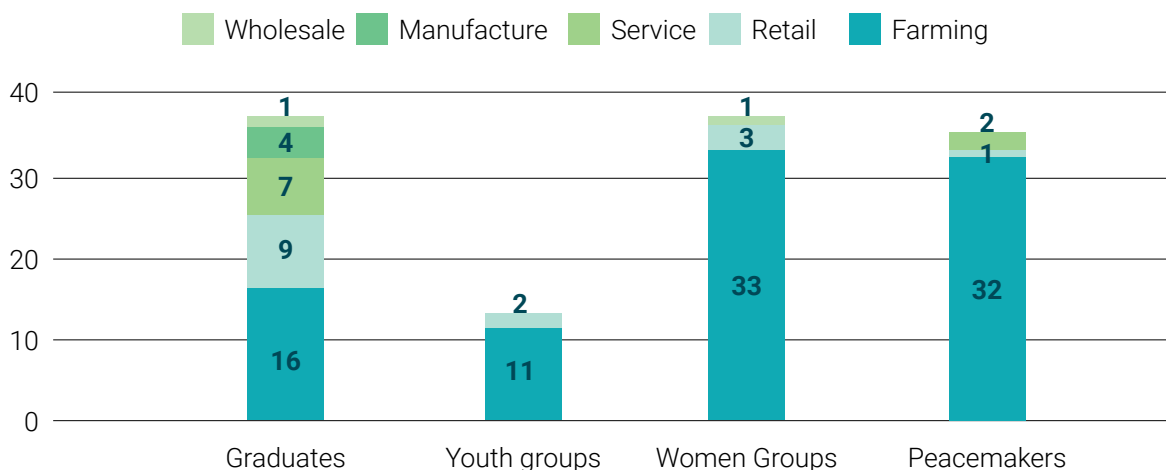
1,323
jobs
created

5,967
indirect beneficiaries
of businesses
(families)

Types of the 23 businesses launched in 2024



Types of the 122 active businesses launched over the years



WPDI's Business Bootcamp program begins with the selection process of business plans that graduates of intermediate entrepreneurship courses can submit to us. Participants interested in the Business Plan Competition form groups of four to six individuals. They undergo specialized training in business plan design through a two-day workshop, after which they develop their business plan documents. These plans are submitted for review by WPDI technical staff and shortlisted groups are invited to compete in a selection process overseen by Gulu district and city officials alongside WPDI experts. This phase includes site visits to proposed project locations before the final approval of the top three teams.

Following the competition, the top three teams receive additional training, on group dynamics, to strengthen their capacity to work together and to equip them with strategies for resolving conflicts that may arise in the course of managing their businesses. The winning teams then undergo training in group dynamics, equipping them with essential leadership skills and the ability to resolve conflicts constructively during their income-generating activities. The business plan development and group dynamics training sessions take place twice a year to ensure continuous capacity building.

In 2024, for the first and second Business Plan Competitions, 16 groups submitted their business plans. After selection, three groups were awarded funding and will continue to receive backstopping to enhance their operations and increase their income.

1. Delight Metal Fabrication and Welding, based in Gulu City, was awarded a grant to purchase a mobile generator for on-site services. This will help improve the quality and timeliness of their service delivery to clients.
2. Koch Goma Nyc Lonyo Women Group, located in Nwoya District, also received a grant to purchase a groundnut processing machine. This machine will add value to their groundnuts, increasing their ability to generate more income.
3. Adak Farmers Youth Group, based in Omoro District and specializing in maize farming, was granted funds to buy a maize processing machine for value addition. This investment will enhance the value of their maize and help boost their earnings.



Delight Metal Fabrication receive growing demand for their products following WPD I Business and Entrepreneurship training

Who are they?

Delight Metal Fabrication is a six-member group (five young men and one woman), aged between 21 and 30, who are engaged in metal fabrication work in Gulu City. Each member remains actively involved in the group's business activities. The members learned about the program through the CLC training and joined to gain valuable skills.

Context

Before receiving support, they faced persistent challenges with supply chains, including delays, rising costs, and shortages, which have been a significant barrier to their business operations. WPD I provided training and grants to the group, but there remains a need for continuous follow-up and on-site training.

Expanding with the support of WPD I

Initially focused solely on metal fabrication, the group achieved sales of 6 million UGX from the production of doors and windows. With the growing demand for their products, they decided

to diversify and now also offer services such as device repairs, compound mowing, and printing letters on signposts and logos, which has brought in additional income.

The group plans to purchase a mobile generator, which will allow them to work at sites away from their workshop and offer the generator for hire when opportunities arise, helping them earn more money. One of the group members shared, "When we started this project, I wasn't very skilled in welding, but now I'm very good at it." The group is extremely grateful for the support they've received, which has exposed them to numerous opportunities and experiences.

"With the increasing demand for our products and services, we opened a metal fabrication outlet at Cuda Trading Center to boost sales and raise visibility for our business. This move has led to increased production and more on-site work contracts," said Robert Awany, the group's Operations Manager. "We are now producing more doors and windows, and we have enough capital to provide services to our clients."



Supporting Women and Youth-Led Businesses

In addition to implementing the Business Bootcamp at its CLC in Gulu, WPDI supported the development of 16 other groups, seven women (with 84 members) and nine youth groups (with 111 members), from across the Acholi Sub-Region. As part of our strategy to include individuals from vulnerable contexts in remote areas, the groups were selected with the support of local leaders from the different target locations. In this arrangement, the groups are constituted at the onset of the program (not after graduation as is the case for the regular program) and are taken through WPDI's curriculum directly in their communities. Upon completion of the training, they submit business plans to a jury and once the most promising ones have been approved, the groups are also trained in group dynamics before receiving their grants to launch their income-generating activities. As WPDI's priority groups, women and youth receive targeted support

through various initiatives, including business and entrepreneurship training. These programs focus on equipping participants with essential business skills, guiding them through market research, and assisting in business plan development. A structured three-month program prepares entrepreneurs to qualify for business grants, ensuring they have the necessary foundation to launch and sustain their ventures. Additionally, mentorship and technical support are offered to business groups across key locations such as Gulu City, Omoro, Tochi, and Kitgum Municipality. By addressing gaps in financial literacy and business operations, these initiatives strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of women- and youth-led enterprises, enabling them to thrive. Through continuous support and capacity-building efforts, these entrepreneurs gain the confidence and resources needed to drive economic transformation within their communities.



Aciro Gladys explains her business success since enrolling with WPDI in 2022

Embracing New Business Opportunities

My name is Aciro Gladys, and I'm from Layik West Village in Chua West, Kitgum District. I'm 26 years old, married, and have four children. I learned about WPDI through my local LC1, who informed me that the organization was offering business skills and entrepreneurship training for vulnerable women. I decided to register voluntarily for the program and underwent months of training, which included business plan development and group dynamics. After completing the training, my group, Lamola Women Group, received a grant to start a goat rearing project. Each member was given six goats to rear at home due to the lack of land for communal rearing.

Overcoming Economic Hardship to Expand the Business

Before joining WPDI, I had basic tailoring skills but lacked the resources to make a living from it. I didn't own a sewing machine, so I had to rent one for 20,000 UGX a month and also rent a veranda to sew, which was expensive and didn't generate much income because most customers preferred to go to tailors in lockups. To make ends meet, I worked in the quarry and in people's gardens, earning extra money to support my four children, as my husband was also unemployed. Our home was filled with conflict because of financial struggles.

However, after receiving support from WPDI in 2022, including six goats (one male and five female), things started to change. The goats multiplied, and I sold five of them, using the money to buy my own sewing machine. I was able to rent a lockup for my tailoring business, which significantly increased my sales. With the additional earnings, I bought another sewing machine, trained my husband in tailoring, and now, together as a family, we run the business. This year, we added three more sewing machines, one of which is electric, and we now have four students who pay us 50,000 UGX each month for tailoring training.

A Successful Family of Business Owners

I am incredibly grateful to WPDI for choosing me and transforming my life. Through their support, I became a skilled tailor, provided a job for my husband, and grew into a successful business woman. Today, in addition to the monthly income from my trainees, I make at least 50,000 UGX in sales every day. I can now take care of my family. I no longer work in the quarry or other people's gardens. Instead, I employ others to work on my farms. Most importantly, there is now peace in my home. The support from WPDI has truly changed our lives.

Community leader reflects of the business incubation program



"I extend my heartfelt gratitude to WPDI for their invaluable intervention in my community, particularly in empowering two groups—youth and women—with essential business skills and providing each group with grants.

These trainings have significantly strengthened teamwork and group cohesion among the participants, fostering a sense of unity and

collaboration. Moreover, they have led to a remarkable shift in mindset, enabling the youth and women to view life from a more positive and proactive perspective.

I must confess that 70% of the selected youths were once street children and lawbreakers. However, through this program, they have undergone a complete transformation. They now possess a positive outlook on life and are no longer idle; instead, they are actively engaged in productive work, improving not only their livelihoods but also the overall wellbeing of the community. WPDI's efforts have truly made a lasting impact, and I deeply appreciate their commitment to changing lives." Aciro Babra, Community Development Officer, Pager Division, Kitgum Municipal Council



Health and Wellbeing: Pathways to Inner Peace

2,154 total Health & Wellbeing beneficiaries

252

Sexual &
Reproductive
Health
beneficiaries

761

Sexual &
Reproductive
Health event
participants

370

Trauma Healing
individual
counseling
beneficiaries

220

Trauma
Healing event
participants

551

students trained
in Social and
Emotional
Learning

The Acholi Sub-Region has been deeply affected by the traumatic impact of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) operations, with countless individuals enduring horrific events such as abduction, imprisonment, torture, loss of livelihood, and physical assault. These experiences have left survivors with profound psychological scars, including depression, anxiety disorders, suicidal tendencies, substance abuse, and a sense of disconnection from family and community. Such trauma, compounded by stigma and a lack of access to proper mental health care, has perpetuated cycles of generational pain and conflict. Recognizing this gap in care for the most vulnerable, WPDI has tailored its programs to address these critical needs in conflict-affected communities.

Our Health and Wellbeing pillar includes Sexual and Reproductive Health Education (SRH) and trauma-informed therapy to help individuals heal from the deep psychological wounds caused by violence. WPDI also conducts awareness sessions on topics related to health and wellbeing that impact the community in order to change behaviors and deconstruct taboos. Trauma Healing and Sexual Reproductive Health courses were conducted at the CLC with participants attending class three times a week. In 2024, 370 people benefitted from individual trauma healing counseling, while 252 were trained in Sexual and Reproductive Health.



Delivering Trauma Healing in the Acholi Sub-Region

Women and youth play a vital role as advocates for Trauma Healing and peacebuilding. These efforts build the capacity of the community to support former abductees, former child combatants, and other prisoners of war. They also help refugees and others who have suffered horrific experiences begin the grieving process. Additionally, Trauma Healing assists poorly defended survivors in developing better coping strategies, especially through cognitive modulation of emotions in talk therapy. Ultimately, Trauma Healing ensures that survivors can experience healing, allowing them to begin rebuilding their lives and communities.

In 2024, WPDI carried out comprehensive screening, counseling, home visits, follow-ups, and referrals for a total of 370 survivors in the Acholi Sub-Region. The clients presented a range of psychological and mental health challenges, such as severe depression, high suicide tendencies, anxiety disorders, revenge

tendencies, functional impairments, family disconnection, substance abuse issues, feelings of spirit possession, and other psychological complications.

Additionally, 66 individuals were referred for clinical management at various district facilities, with conditions such as Bipolar Affective Disorder and severe depression. These individuals are being monitored for self-harm and aggression.

Furthermore, WPDI conducted systematic screenings to assess Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other mental health concerns, identifying individuals with conditions and evaluating the severity and duration of their symptoms. Using the guiding tool entitled Post-Traumatic Stress Diagnostic Scale (PDS), the screening process served as a vital entry point for their counseling therapy.



Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns

Mental health awareness campaigns were carried out in the community and at partner schools to expand the reach of our program in the Acholi Sub-Region. A total of 31 sessions were conducted in Kitgum, Lamwo, Amuru, Nwoya, Gulu City, Pader, Agago, Omoro, Gulu District. Participants were empowered with knowledge of identifying, managing and referring trauma survivors.

Four radio talk shows were also carried out in two radio stations in Kitgum and in Nwoya district. Issues of gender-based violence and mental health were discussed and the guest speakers were the Senior Probation and welfare officer, Community Liaison officer of the police, the mental health Unit and Youth Peacemakers.



Training of Youth Leaders on Trauma Healing and Adolescent Health

In view of raising the capacity of WPD's youth peacemakers in the Acholi Sub-Region, a five-day training was conducted on Trauma Healing, Hygiene Education, Life Skills, Counseling, and Communication, targeting 15 individuals. This training equipped them with facilitation skills and knowledge on Trauma Healing and

hygiene education. Upon completion, the youth peacemakers are expected to contribute to the work of WPD by providing psychosocial support, facilitate Community Dialogues, identify survivors and refer them to various service points, all of which as part of their mission to help reduce violence within their communities.

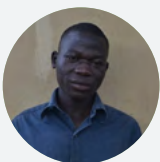


Sexual and Reproductive Health

In many of the Acholi Sub-region communities traditional norms make it difficult to disseminate scientific information on issues like Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH). To circumvent this obstacle, WPDI has established a SRH program that is intended to provide such knowledge as well as a safe space where these issues can be discussed freely and candidly. Thanks to these efforts individuals have more capacity to make informed decisions on their wellbeing, with a positive impact on their lives.

On November 16, and December 5, 2024, WPDI, in partnership with Gulu Regional Referral Hospital

and Patongo Health Center IV, organized and implemented health camps in West Acholi and East Acholi, respectively. These camps reached 451 individuals, providing them with mental health and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights messages. Out of this total, 333 individuals received screening and counseling for trauma and mental health. The health camps offered a range of services, including mental health screenings, HIV counseling and testing, family planning services, and educational awareness for clients from both communities.



"I moved to Kitgum town in 2017 due to a land dispute in my village. Before leaving, I saw horrific acts, including murders, one of which was my father's, which left me deeply shaken. For a long time, I struggled with sleepless nights and nightmares, which made life unbearable. I felt alone and rejected by my peers. I sought help from village leaders, but they couldn't offer any real solutions. Then, luckily WPDI came to Pandwong, where I live, to discuss Trauma Healing. They connected me with a counselor named Crady, who guided me through the healing process. Now, I've managed to overcome my distress and can even support other young people facing similar challenges. I'm grateful to WPDI for restoring hope in my life."

Ocen Anthony,

Trauma Healing beneficiary from Lukung



Teacher shares feedback on rolling out Social Emotional Learning in School

Anena Jaklyn, teacher at Kitgum Primary School



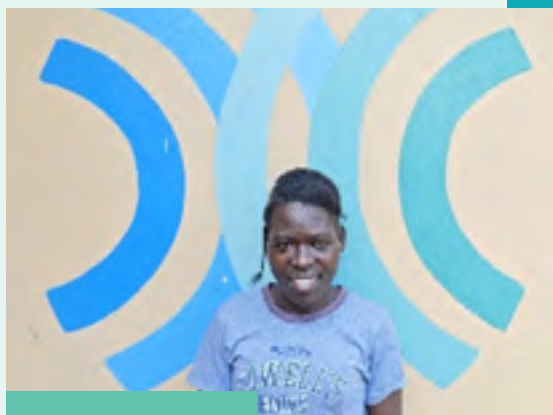
"Teaching here has given me a front-row seat to the incredible effects of Trauma Healing awareness education on our school community. Our region bears the deep wounds of prolonged conflict, scars that still shape the lives of our pupils and their families. When Trauma Healing education was introduced, it sparked a powerful shift, ushering in hope and renewal.

Before this program, many of our pupils carried heavy emotional burdens—showing withdrawal, aggression, or an inability to focus in class. These were clear signs of unresolved trauma,

but as teachers, we often lacked the tools to help, leaving the children struggling both academically and socially. Through Trauma Healing awareness education, we gained the skills to spot trauma's signs and grasp how it affects a child's growth and ability to learn. We were taught ways to offer emotional support and build a safe, caring classroom space. This understanding shifted our approach—from frustration to empathy and patience. The change in our pupils has been striking. With steady support and open talks about mental health and healing, we've watched children rediscover their confidence and excitement for learning. Those who once found it hard to trust or join in are now forming bonds and engaging in class. Their academic progress has improved too, reflecting the strong link between emotional health and mental growth.

Beyond the classroom, this education has brought our school community closer together. Teachers, pupils, and parents now collaborate to nurture healing and strength. We hold regular discussions and workshops on mental health, breaking down the silence and shame tied to trauma. For me, this journey has reshaped how I teach and deepened my compassion. Seeing hope light up my pupils' faces has convinced me that Trauma Healing awareness education is vital for raising a resilient generation. The road to healing continues, but with ongoing support and awareness, we're laying the groundwork for lasting peace and progress."

Healing, empowerment, and advocacy: my journey with WPD



Recognizing the Need for Healing and Growth

I am Acen Lillian Banya, a resident of Gulu City. I am 36 years old, an Acholi by tribe, a Ugandan by nationality, and a mother of children. I was introduced to WPD by a friend who told me about the Trauma Healing and Sexual and Reproductive Health training for adolescents. I was immediately impressed because I realized that throughout my life, I had gone through painful experiences and was traumatized. I knew that by attending this free training, I would find answers to the questions that have troubled me throughout my life, especially living in a community marked by violence. In this community, I have met many women, children, and men who have suffered various forms of violence, and many continue to struggle with it today.

Gaining Confidence and Interpersonal Learning Skills

These trainings have equipped me with valuable life skills, and with this empowerment, I now have the confidence to counsel adolescents on

health issues, behavioral changes, interpersonal relationships, and how to interact with adolescents to help them adopt good morals. I also feel ready to guide them in overcoming their fears about sexual health issues, personal growth, and daily life. By creating awareness of life skills, parenting will become easier, and we can better cope with the challenges of the developing world.

Spreading the Knowledge and Becoming an Advocate for Change

The facilitators have inspired me to become an advocate for change. Their friendly, cooperative, and interactive teaching methods, along with open participation and respect for our views and feelings, helped me engage deeply in the lessons. The critical thinking and brainstorming exercises opened my mind, and the flexibility of the training allowed me to grow. This experience has helped me understand who I am, discover the power within me, and prepare to be an advocate for change in my community. I am ready to inform the youth, parents, friends, and adolescents about their life values and encourage them to attend training sessions at WPD. The time frame for these programs is well-structured, giving people from all walks of life the opportunity to attend. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to our facilitators for being excellent role models. I truly love the discussions in every session. Thank you so much for everything!





Peace Through Sports

16

teams managed
by WPDI

275

regular training participants
and coaches

25,000

participants in
competition events

WPDI has been implementing the Peace Through Sports program in the Acholi Sub-Region for the second successive year, working closely with local leaders to identify and support community-based teams. This program leverages the universal language of sports to transcend cultural, linguistic, and social barriers, bringing people together, fostering mutual respect, and breaking down prejudices related to race, religion, nationality, or social status. By promoting teamwork, shared goals, and positive interactions, Peace Through Sports not only cultivates immediate harmony but also lays the foundation for long-term peacebuilding. However, for sustainable change, sports must be integrated into a broader, multi-faceted peacebuilding approach.

In 2024, the Peace Through Sports initiative had a significant impact on youth and communities across social, psychological, educational, and economic dimensions. Additionally, Peace Engagement Celebrations allowed young people from diverse backgrounds to come together, strengthening social bonds and reducing prejudices. The program also instilled core values such as discipline, perseverance, teamwork, and respect, essential for personal growth and development.

During the year, WPDI supported 266 players across 16 football teams, including seven girls' teams and nine boys' teams, along with nine coaches. These teams successfully registered for the Community/

District-supported sportive event, with assistance from WPDI who covered the registration fees and provided additional sports equipment as well as backstopping to improve the leadership capacity of team officials.

Furthermore, since the sports program is also an integrated platform for overall youth development, 266 players and 9 coaches received training in ICT, Trauma Healing, business skills, Conflict Resolution Education (CRE), and life skills, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and abilities to act as peace ambassadors in their communities. The program engaged key stakeholders, including nine District Football Associations, nine District Sports Officers or DEOs, as well as youth and sports councilors and other district leaders.

Sports equipment like uniforms, boots, and footballs was distributed to all 16 teams, enhancing their capacity and motivation. A total of 31 Peace Engagement Celebrations were held across the region, with nine directly supported by WPDI and 22 organized by the community. In addition, two radio programs were aired to discuss how football can unite conflicting communities.

The success of the Peace Through Sports program in Acholi demonstrated to local and national stakeholders how sports can be a powerful tool for uniting people, promoting social cohesion, and building a foundation for lasting peace.



From the field to the future: learning more than sporting skills



A talented athlete learns peace through sports

Kidega Nicholas is a talented high school dropout athlete from the community of Gulu. Known among his peers for his humor and unwavering commitment on the football field, he has earned admiration as a strong leader with a commendable character. His teammates respect him not only for his skills but also for his dedication and positive attitude.

"I first heard about the Peace Through Sports program when my coach invited me to join practice sessions at a nearby playground. Many of my friends were also invited to try out for the WPDI team. Before joining, my coach encouraged me to be part of the program because, as a school dropout, I could benefit from other opportunities such as business skills training, ICT training, and Conflict Resolution Education.

Tactical, technical and mental skills beyond football

Beyond football, the business skills, ICT, and CRE trainings have opened my mind to new possibilities beyond just playing the sport. I have started thinking about how to create a sustainable source of income for myself, and with the knowledge I have gained so far, I plan to start a livelihood project by next year.

I appreciate the structured training sessions led by our coach, where we learn about formations, tactical and technical strategies, and composure under pressure. These are skills that you wouldn't easily acquire without training in a well-organized team like WPDI. Additionally, WPDI has provided equipment for practice and matches, which is a huge relief because purchasing such gear individually can be very expensive.

Friendships and networking through trainings and tournaments

Through the various matches and tournaments I have participated in, I have gained invaluable experience and learned from different playing styles and opportunities. The community-based friendly matches have allowed me to meet new people who have eventually become close friends. Our daily training sessions also introduced me to new teammates, creating even more opportunities for friendship and networking.

Beyond football, I have had the privilege of meeting some of the WPDI staff, who have since become my mentors and friends outside the sporting environment. Their guidance and support have been instrumental in shaping my vision for the future, and I am truly grateful for the opportunities WPDI has provided me."

Peace Engagement Days

Peace Engagement Day is a series of monthly events that WPDI organizes as part of its Peace Through Sports Pillar. The days mainly consist of a football mini-tournament and community dialogues on peace-related themes. The themes covered in the program focused on several key aspects essential for both personal and team development. Participants were encouraged to respect the dignity of their opponents, embrace the values of teamwork and tolerance, and understand the importance of fair play and regulations. The program emphasized tolerance and fairness, fostering peaceful living among individuals and communities.

Values of openness, respect and tolerance were integral components, ensuring that all participants felt valued and included regardless of their backgrounds. Physical exercises and fitness training were incorporated to promote overall wellbeing, while football drills and skill development helped enhance technical abilities on the field. Additionally, the program addressed managing emotions and tempers, equipping players with strategies to remain composed under pressure. Safety and sports hygiene were also highlighted to ensure a healthy and injury-free playing environment.



"I am pleased to welcome you to Kitgum District. Lalano Sub-County has long been one of the most violent communities in the district. However, the introduction of the Peace Through Sports program has played a crucial role in engaging the youth, shifting their focus away from conflict and hostility toward neighboring communities. Instead, they now come together to play friendly matches and foster peaceful coexistence. Beyond sports, the program's business skills, ICT, and Trauma Healing trainings serve as a testament that peace is the foundation for improved livelihoods. Through WPDI's support, young people are not only embracing harmony but also gaining valuable skills that empower them to build a better future."

Mr. Canwat Pido,
Sport Officer in Kitgum



"WDPI has been collaborating closely with local government leadership for quite some time. When the Peace Through Sports program was introduced, I immediately saw its value and chose to support its implementation. Many of our youth today are idle and often turn to drinking after work. However, this program encourages active participation, helping young people in my community shift their focus away from negative influences and engage in something positive and constructive."

Lakony Michael,
District Chairman





Conclusion



In 2024, WPDl carried out its programs in Acholi with significant developments in the mental health and wellbeing as well as sports programs, demonstrating the value of integrating these elements into broader peace and development initiatives. These two programs have shown promising results in fostering community cohesion and resilience. We were all the more satisfied with their success that their full-fledged implementation meant that we have been able to deploy in Acholi the full extent of our new strategic framework, built on four pillars: Peacebuilding, Livelihood, Health and Wellbeing, and Peace Through Sports. This holistic approach has allowed WPDl to address the multifaceted challenges faced by the Acholi Sub-Region more effectively.

WPDl continued to make substantial progress across the board. For instance, the number of individuals reached by Lead Peacemakers on our behalf increased significantly from 31,924 in 2023 to 90,280 in 2024. This achievement was due to our resolute efforts to boost the capacity of our youth peacemakers and beneficiaries to take action in

their communities. The impact of these efforts was particularly evident in our peacebuilding activities. Although we were active in fewer schools in 2024 than in 2023, we significantly expanded the reach of advocacy campaigns in schools, impacting 16,447 people compared to 12,635 in 2023.

In the realm of livelihood, the number of SMEs supported through our Business Bootcamp increased from 99 to 122, and jobs created rose from 1,110 to 1,323. Here, our progress has been incremental but steady, strengthening WPDl's role as a key partner in the positive transformation of the community. These figures speak to the adaptability and resilience of WPDl's model, which has been continuously updated and improved over the past years.

In conclusion, we wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated staff, partners, and the wider community for their unwavering support and collaboration. Together, we will continue to build a stable, prosperous, and peaceful future for the Acholi Sub-Region.



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