

Backup Uganda

Annual Report

2019

Compiled by:

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Introduction

This document offers you a detailed update on what took place in Backup Uganda's 2019. A year of expansion in all areas: we added primary schools, a primary teachers college (PTC), and more education-based organizations to our list of partners. After getting a brief taste of working together with Gulu Core PTC, we were honored to be welcomed back in 2019 to run a full training program for all student teachers. We moved out of Gulu district more, through partner organizations and national networks. And, at the end of 2019, we had the pleasure to host Gulu Giving Tuesday, our first fundraising event within Uganda.

2019 was a year that taught us more about the sustainability of our work. We continued our collaboration with the primary schools we partnered with since 2018 and learned more than we expected about 'not leaving a school and taking our impact with us'. These lessons will be represented clearly in our 2020 activities.

We are more than grateful to all our partners: schools, a primary teachers college, organizations, and of course, our donors. Your warm welcome, hard work and encouragement makes our efforts possible. We wish for 2020 to give us the opportunities to grow our Backup family even further.

Annemaaike Kruisselbrink
Co-Founder & Uganda Country Director

The Movement

Description:

In 2019, we continued our partnership with Highland Primary School and Gulu PTC Demonstration Primary School, although the collaboration looked differently compared to the first year. Whereas the first year was fully focused on training, this second year of partnership revolved around enabling the schools to sustain what was learned in year one.

We commenced a partnership with Gulu Town Primary School, Gulu Prison Primary School, Kasubi Army Primary School and Gulu Core Primary Teachers College in 2019. Gulu Core PTC partners with the three primary schools mentioned, which means their student teachers conduct their school practice within these schools. We trained the teachers, parents and administrators at the primary schools simultaneously with the student teachers, PES tutor and administrators at Gulu Core PTC.

Progress at Partner Primary Schools 2018

Successes:

- During term 1, we held a refresher workshop at both schools that included topics from last year's training for revision, and a more detailed introduction to how to develop and use individualized support plans (ISPs).
- We repeated our lesson observations at both schools in term 1, to monitor the teachers' implementation of what they had learned in 2018. At both schools, we observed a significant difference in the extent to which the teachers identified and supported children with possible learning difficulties, compared to the start of 2018.
- We worked together with the focal person at each school to practise the implementation of ISPs and guide them through the process. At Gulu PTC Demonstration Primary School, the focal person managed to develop an ISP for a learner, together with the learner's teacher, and the teacher used it successfully. At Highland Primary School, the focal person started the process of developing an ISP for two learners, but both learners changed schools during the school year. We did not manage to start the process again for other learners.

Challenges:

- Involving learners' parents/guardians in the process of developing an ISP can be challenging. Some live far, others are difficult to get in touch with, and others do not follow appointments.
- The focal persons have many obligations and are willing to add another one, but this offers challenges in terms of dividing their time over all their tasks. Coordinating all

activities related to inclusive education may be too much work for one person within a school.

- Learners often change to a different school during the school year, which makes it challenging to follow through with an ISP.

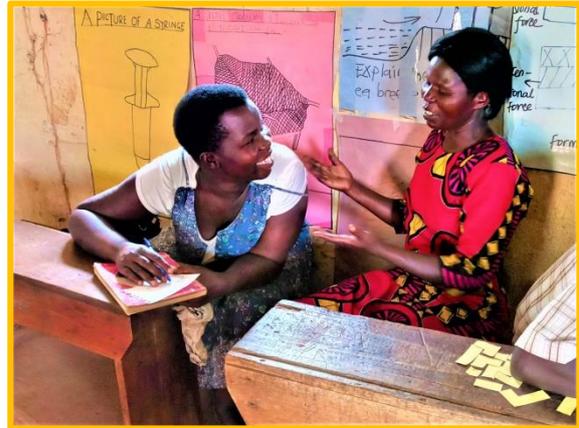
Way forward:

- To spread the focal persons' responsibilities, we will be establishing small Inclusive Education Committees (IECs) within the partner schools who can ensure the sustainability of the skills that the teachers and administrators have been trained in.
- We will train all teachers in peer supervision, so that they can continue the lesson observations independently and internally. The school's IEC will monitor this.

Progress at Partner Primary Schools 2019

Successes:

- We held a start meeting and 8 workshops with a total of 80 teachers and administrators at all three new partner schools. The workshops included:
 - Introduction to learning difficulties
 - Progress tracking
 - Individualized support plans
 - Dyslexia
 - Dyscalculia
 - AD(H)D
 - Behavioral difficulties
 - Autism



The teachers' attendance at Gulu Town Primary School and Gulu Prison Primary School improved as soon as we were given permission to hold the workshops during lunch hours, instead of at the end of the day during the time for extra lessons.

- We completed a total of 45 mornings of lesson observations at all three primary schools (Gulu Town Primary School: 15, Gulu Prison Primary School: 14, Kasubi Army Primary School: 16). In term 1 we did this weekly, in term 2 and 3 it took place bi-weekly. With the exception of 1 teacher, all teachers have welcomed us into their classrooms and participated actively in the feedback moment after each lesson. Towards the end of the school year, several teachers started asking our team to observe them more, even if they had already been observed frequently.
- We organized 5 video calls with teachers at Frostig School, USA – a school specifically for children who experience learning difficulties. The teachers at our partner schools and

the teachers at Frostig School exchanged experiences and advice on how to support children with specific difficulties, especially when teaching large classes.

- We hosted 3 parents meetings at Gulu Town Primary School and Gulu Prison Primary School, during which we received a total of 192 parents. The first meeting included an introduction to learning difficulties and to our project in general, meeting 2 covered behavioral difficulties, and the third meeting revolved around AD(H)D and autism. All meetings were focused on enabling parents to identify the first signs of possible learning difficulties in their children at home, and what role they can play to support them.
- We finished 3 learning and evaluation sessions at all primary schools at the end of each term, and occasionally at the start of a new term. These sessions gave us an opportunity to share our feedback, to listen to the teachers' and administrators' feedback, and to discuss all barriers to implementation that the school teams experienced along the way.
- We completed all planned participatory baseline and endline activities involving learners, teachers, administrators and parents. This helped us gain insight in the progress that all stakeholders have made during this year of partnership. It also helped us learn about our own growth and further need for improvement.



Challenges:

- At Kasubi Army Primary School, the relationship with the head teacher has been challenging at times. We have received negative remarks about our presence on numerous occasions, although we have tried to adjust our activities and timing to the school's schedule as much as possible. We have not been given the opportunity to hold parents meetings for the learners' parents, and we have not been able to hold an end of year evaluation moment with the school's administrators. We are concerned about the sustainability of the project at this school.
- At Gulu Town Primary School, one teacher has consistently refused our team to do lesson observations while she teaches. We have decided not to force our way into the classroom, as this would defeat the purpose of our mentoring.
- When teachers workshops took place at the end of the school day, the teachers' attendance was relatively low. This continued to be the case at Kasubi Army Primary School.

- At parents meetings, the turn up was relatively low, most likely due to parents fearing the school's pressure to clear school fees. Another reason could be that many parents are at work during the time for the meetings, as they took place on week days.
- Including P7 learners in baseline and endline activities has been challenging, as they were occupied with PLE preparations during the baseline, and they had already started their holidays during the endline.
- During the video calls with the Frostig team, we experienced internet challenges several times. In addition, it is challenging to have the calls with many teachers at once, since we are using a laptop.

Way forward:

- In 2020, we will include a refresher training on peer supervision and other aspects that were not clear from previous sessions.
- We will set up an IEC within each school to continue monitoring and supporting all inclusive education related activities.
- We shall continue to have regular videocalls between the schools' teachers and the Frostig School teachers.

Progress at Gulu Core PTC

Successes:

- With 82 student teachers in year 1, we completed 3 workshops:
 - Introduction to learning difficulties
 - Progress tracking
 - Individualized support plans

We added the third workshop towards the end of the academic year, because we realized that the student teachers will have less time for this in their second year.

- With 84 student teachers in year 2, we completed 7 workshops:
 - Progress tracking
 - Individualized support plans
 - Dyslexia
 - Dyscalculia
 - AD(H)D
 - Behavioral difficulties
 - Autism

The final 2 topics were covered on one day, together with the final learning and evaluation session.

- We did lesson observations for the student teachers in year 2, during their first and second school practice. The first school practice took place at our partner schools. For the second school practice, the PTC decided to partner with several different primary

schools. We managed to follow up with 5 student teachers at St Mauritz Primary School, in addition to the student teachers we did see at our partner schools. The student teachers very much appreciated the observations and the feedback we shared. They explained that it is difficult to identify and help learners with possible difficulties within the short time of the school practice, but they did recognize specific characteristics.

- We held 1 learning and evaluation session with the student teachers in year 1 in term 1, and 2 with the student teachers in year 2, in term 1 and 3. The sessions gave us more



insight in the impact of our training and observations, plus the barriers that the student teachers experienced when it comes to implementation. For example, several student teachers shared with us that established teachers who are not trained by Backup, encourage student teachers to not focus on children with learning difficulties during their school practice.

- The PES tutor gave us access to his classes and offered us time for the workshops during his scheduled teaching time. As the workshops were cut in half in terms of time (1 hour instead of 2), they fit well within the timetable.
- We completed all baseline and endline activities with the student teachers.

Challenges:

- Setting up a schedule for the workshops took long at the start of the year, as the PTC delayed in finalizing its own timetable. Once we were given specific times within the timetable, this challenge was solved.
- Student teachers' attendance was unpredictable because of other activities happening at the PTC at the same time.
- The involvement of the PES tutor in the workshops was minimal. We had intended to run the workshops together, but we facilitated most of the workshops without him. We predict a low chance of sustainability because of this.
- Sessions started late on a regular basis, due to tea and meals being served later than scheduled.
- We had to reschedule the last sessions for year 2 several times due to time pressure and gaps in communication from the PTC's administrative team. As mentioned, we ended up combining the final two workshops plus the final learning and evaluation session.
- The PTC decided to change its partner primary schools for the second school practice in term 3. This meant that the established teachers at these schools had not been trained by us, yet we intended for student teachers to meet trained established teachers to be able to work together optimally in terms of identifying and helping children with possible learning difficulties.

- The final evaluation meeting with the PTC's administrators has not yet taken place, due to several administrators being absent at the end of the school year.

Way forward:

- The final evaluation meeting with the administrators and the PES tutor will take place in January 2020. This, plus the analysis of the endline data, will determine the way forward for our collaboration with Gulu Core PTC in 2020 (and beyond).
- We are likely to focus more on training tutors in 2020, to enable them to continue the workshops independently and/or integrate them in their own teaching.
- We will assist in setting up an IEC at the PTC, to sustain and monitor all activities related to inclusive education within the PTC.

Networks & Collaborations

Quality & Content Working Group Gulu

Description:

Since May 2017, Backup Uganda has been leading a Quality & Content Working Group for all education-based NGOs in Gulu district, together with the Gulu District Education Office. The Working Group exists to join hands in advocating for quality education in Gulu district and to avoid duplication. The leadership of the Working Group became rotational in 2019.

Successes:

- We held a total of 11 Working Group meetings in 2019.
- We held a successful first 30for30 Reading Campaign in April, involving 17 primary

schools in Gulu district. Every school was guided by a Working Group member on how to integrate 30 minutes of reading for fun daily for every learner. In the lower classes, reading aloud was used by the teachers as well. The campaign was funded by Save the Children, which included materials like banners, posters, stickers, T-shirts and refreshments. An honest evaluation meeting took place afterwards, and members



brainstormed about a second edition in 2020.

- One of the member organizations facilitated a read aloud training for all members, which they can use to train teachers and others they work with.
- Representatives of several member organizations held a short survey at their partner primary schools, to ask teachers' and head teachers' input on advocacy topics they would like the Working Group to prioritize. Based on the results, members decided to prioritize teachers absenteeism and payment of school fees as the next focus in 2020.
- Several new members joined the Working Group, and others started attending more frequently. On average, the meetings are attended by 7 representatives.

Challenges:

- During the reading campaign, we experienced a gap in communication concerning decisions made by the funding organization, Save the Children. To manage their funding well, specific regulations had to be followed, which were not shared with the Working Group members. In addition, materials that were needed to launch the campaign in time at the schools delayed and some were not sufficient.
- The Working Group has few members who come back every time, which made the workload for the reading campaign high. It also delays the meetings in general, as new representatives have to be updated about what happened in their absence. Towards the end of the year, the turn up became low and a meeting had to be postponed because of this.
- The meetings used to take place at the Teachers Resource Center, but the ceiling became unstable and it was challenging to obtain the key in time for the meetings to start. We decided to have members host the meetings on a rotational schedule.

Way forward:

- Starting from the first meeting in 2020, members will begin the preparations for the next Reading Campaign. The campaign will start on DEAR day, 12th March 2020, and will run for 30 days.
- After the Reading Campaign, the next topic to focus on will be teachers absenteeism, combined with payment of school fees. First ideas have already been proposed, and further details will be discussed in the new year.

Membership of FENU, SNE-TWG & SQUAMI-CRANE

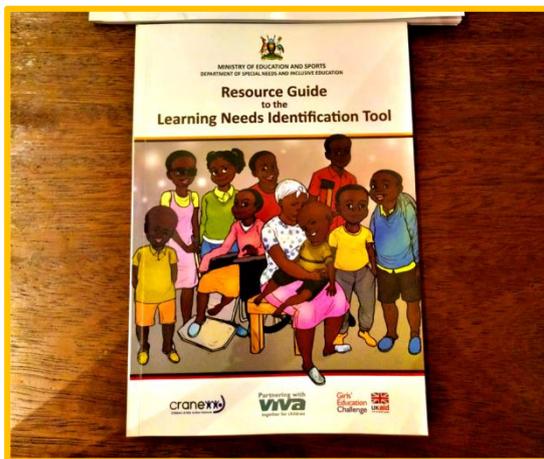
Description:

Since 2018, Backup Uganda has been a member of three initiatives that consist of various education-based NGOs and government bodies in Uganda. The Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda (FENU) is a national coalition of NGOs that emphasizes the right to education for all children in Uganda. The Special Needs Education Technical Working Group (SNE-TWG) is a

collaboration between the Special Needs Education Department at the Ministry of Education & Sports and other partners in the area of Special Needs Education in Uganda. SQUAMI-CRANE (Special Needs Quality Assurance & Monitoring Initiative, funded by CRANE) is an initiative focused on improving special needs services in Uganda, with a current focus on data collection and assessment.

Successes:

- SQUAMI-CRANE: A representative from Backup Uganda joined two other SQUAMI members for a 3-day training at Gulu Core PTC, training all tutors on the use of the



National Learning Needs Identification Tool and its resource guide, as well as how to teach student teachers how to use it. A detailed way forward was created, although this has not been followed up on so far. In July, the resource guide belonging to this Tool was launched officially and handed over to the Ministry of Education and Sports. This launch was combined with the Inclusive Education Conference that the SNE-TWG had planned earlier (see next paragraph). An evaluation meeting took place afterwards with the

organizing members. Towards the end of the year, SQUAMI started its road to becoming an independent entity – most likely an NGO – with a founding meeting.

- SNE-TWG: The year started with preparations for the Inclusive Education Conference that had been postponed from December 2018. As mentioned, it was later merged with the launch of the Tool's resource guide. An extra meeting took place with representatives from the Special Needs Department at the Ministry of Education & Sports and several NGOs on the nationwide roll-out of the Tool. It was resolved that the Special Needs Department will develop a plan for this and will share this with NGOs.

Challenges:

- FENU: Our representative was unable to attend any of the quarterly FENU meetings, due to late communication about meeting dates by FENU and other colliding activities in Gulu.
- SQUAMI-CRANE: during the training at Gulu Core PTC, another training took place simultaneously, which distracted the tutors and made their attendance low and unpredictable. The training was prepared late, which caused training materials to be delayed.
- SNE-TWG: Our representative missed two meetings because of not receiving an invite for one, and experiencing transport challenges for the second.

Way forward:

- FENU: The next meeting will take place in quarter 1, 2020.
- SQUAMI-CRANE: SQUAMI needs to get all documents in place to register as an NGO.
- SNE-TWG: Introducing the National Learning Needs Identification Tool and integrating it in our workshops can happen as soon as the roll-out plan has been finalized and shared.

The Alliance

Partnership Accelerated Learning Program with Geneva Global

Description:

Since August 2018, Backup Uganda and Geneva Global have been working together within the Accelerated Learning Program for Northern Uganda (Gulu, Amuru, Omoro and Nwoya district). Backup Uganda trains the facilitators on how to identify and support children with various learning difficulties, and guides the coordinators and supervisors on how to help the facilitators in this process.

Successes:

- We held 3 series of workshops in 2019:
 - Dyslexia, dyscalculia & grouping children with different abilities:
233 facilitators
 - AD(H)D, Autism & group work for children with different abilities:
266 facilitators
18 supervisors & coordinators
 - Individualized support plans, introduction session for new cohort of facilitators:
251 facilitators
16 supervisors & coordinators
- The session on developing and using individualized support plans for learners with difficulties was most successful so far. All participants were highly engaged and although they found it tedious to learn the approach, they acknowledged the value of it and made a proper effort to become familiar with it.
- We received direct feedback from various facilitators, stating that the content of the training sessions has helped them understand and teach children who struggle with learning better. Majority of the facilitators have requested the team from Backup to visit them in their various schools, so that they are able to know whether they are implementing well. We followed up with 4 lesson observations with facilitators at Kasubi Army P/S and Gulu Town P/S so far.

Challenges:

- Follow up in the field (i.e. lesson observations) is needed to guide facilitators further on how to use what they learn during the training sessions. Ideally, this should be continued by the coordinators and supervisors.
- Timely communication from Geneva Global about upcoming trainings would help us to plan and prepare better. Time management on all training days can be improved as well.
- More sensitization may be needed to help the facilitators understand that learning difficulties also exist among themselves, so they should not stigmatize or laugh at each other.
- More emphasis is needed on the origin of learning difficulties - it is not always the environment that causes these problems, but the environment can help in learning to deal with them.
- Sensitization for parents is needed to ensure adequate support from home.
- Training for link schools would help with the transition of learners from speed school to regular classes.



Way forward:

- Include more lesson observations during the school terms.
- Clear and timely communication about upcoming trainings and other activities.
- Training on the Learning Needs Identification Tool can happen for coordinators and supervisors as soon as the roll out plan for the Tool is released by the Ministry of Education & Sports.
- Plan a check in with coordinators and supervisors on the use of ISPs.
- Consider sensitization for parents, possibly through the savings groups.
- Consider training for link schools.

Teacher Training at Shalom Primary School

Description:

In May, we held a 1.5 day training for all 12 teachers and administrators of Shalom Primary School in Pakwach. The sessions included an introduction to learning difficulties, progress tracking, dyslexia, dyscalculia, AD(H)D and behavioral difficulties.

Successes:

- All sessions ran according to plan and all activities were completed.
- The support staff at the school participated in the training as well.
- The group of participants was relatively small, which made it simple to have everyone participate actively in the sessions.

Challenges:

- We had several delays on the first day of the training, as teachers were arriving at school late, and an accident took place around break time that required the teachers' help.
- Although we asked for permission to take photos with the intention of respecting people's choices, an administrator tried convincing those who said no that they should allow their photos to be taken anyway. We decided to explain once more that this is everyone's personal decision.
- We intended to start lesson observations at the school in October, but this did not take place due to travels by the funding partner.



Way forward:

- We plan to reschedule the lesson observations for the start of 2020.
- We will discuss further training needs for the school's team.

Professional Training at African Revival

Description:

At the end of May, we held a half day training for the African Revival team in Gulu, which included a detailed introduction to learning difficulties and other special educational needs.

Successes:

- All 10 staff members participated, including the support staff.
- According to the participants, the workshop was an eyeopener for many of them. They were aware of common special needs, but not of many of the other difficulties that affect the learners impacted by their programs. The content helped a staff member identify a condition that his own child had suffered from.

Challenges:

- The level of training content and the language and terminology used seemed slightly too complex for some of the support staff members at times. The session was tailored to an education team only.
- It was just an introductory session, which meant there was not much time to dive into ways of supporting children with various learning difficulties and disabilities. Further in-depth training would be recommended.

Way forward:

- We are preparing a possible partnership in an upcoming project starting term 3 in 2020, which will include more training for the African Revival team – the education team specifically. If this does not go through, we can propose more in-depth training for the relevant staff members.



Teacher Training in Masaka for Elon University Student

Description:

In July, one of our team members travelled to Masaka for an introduction and progress tracking workshop with 16 teachers from 11 different primary schools in Masaka and Rakai. The workshop was part of an ongoing research done by a student at Elon University, USA.

Successes:

- The participants shared their current knowledge about learning difficulties and were eager to learn more. Everyone participated actively and asked plenty of questions.
- The venue for the workshop was convenient and the host was quite organized.

Challenges:

- Most participants had to travel to the venue on the morning of the workshop, which delayed them and made the session start late. Some participants missed the first parts of the session.

Way forward:

- The student will share the research findings with us around the beginning of 2020.

- We will continue to communicate with the student's supervising professor about possible involvement in the course units he teaches at Elon University. Our Country Director was involved in a brief video call with the professor's students, where she presented Backup Uganda's approach.

Fundraising in Uganda

Gulu Giving Tuesday

Successes:



- The first edition of Gulu Giving Tuesday (#GGT) took place on 3rd December at Bomah Hotel, Gulu. We organized the event in partnership with Lamaro Studio, with the purpose of celebrating the International Day for People with Disabilities. The event raised awareness about disabilities and funds towards Backup Uganda's and Lamaro Studio's work.

- The event included a market and exhibition that included businesses run by and for people with disabilities, a dance performance, a panel discussion on disability inclusion, and an auction.

- Corporate sponsors and NGO partners decided to contribute towards the event.
- Total funds raised towards Backup Uganda's and Lamaro Studio's work: UGS 2,460,500.

Challenges:

- As the event took place for the first time, it was challenging to involve many corporate sponsors.
- The weather conditions and the day of the event (Tuesday) reduced the turn-up at the event and forced people to leave early.

Way forward:

- We shall organize the second edition of the event for December 2020.
- Planning will start from the beginning of 2020 onwards.
- We will start communications with potential sponsors from the start of 2020.
- We will consider having the event take place on a Saturday.
- We would like to offer a program with more variety and entertainment for the second edition.