



# Backup Uganda

## Annual Report

2021

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## Introduction

Where 2020 demanded our flexibility beyond what we could expect, we found out that all the lessons we learned were much needed for 2021. A year of looking forward to and celebrating the reopening of schools, followed by disappointment upon another closure and full lockdown of Uganda, and once again preparations for learners and teachers returning to school.

Our Annual Report 2021 reflects all the directions our team stretched to, to continue promoting inclusive education in Uganda: workshops with school teams, partner organizations and individual professionals, podcast episodes and radio talk shows, preparations for an innovative new approach to training, research and fundraising activities, among others.

We are grateful that we managed to ‘stay alive’ in all interpretations of the term, after the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our partner primary schools, primary teachers colleges, organizations, funders and private donors, plus our fantastic team in Gulu, our Board of Directors and our Advisory Board deserve all the credit for that.

We hope that 2022 may bring a healthy combination of relief, opportunities and growth for everyone involved and contributing to our work. Additional support will be much needed to bridge the gaps related to inclusive education in Uganda.

**Annemaaike Kruisselbrink**  
**Co-Founder & Uganda Country Director**

## The Movement

We were hopeful that 2021 would offer us the opportunity to catch up on the activities we had to postpone due to the pandemic in 2020. To be able to do this, we did not add new schools or PTCs to The Movement. However, a second closure of schools from June until the end of the year and a closure of the PTCs from June to November slowed down our intended pace. Learners and student teachers were forced to continue to learn from home, just like the previous year.

### Progress at Partner Primary Schools



#### Successes

- Partner schools 2018 & 2019: Out of the 5 primary schools we started our collaboration with in 2018 and 2019, we were able to continue engaging with 4 schools. At Gulu Town Primary School, Gulu Prison Primary School, Gulu PTC Demonstration Primary School and Highland Primary School, we completed a morning of lesson observations to follow up on the teachers' continued implementation of their knowledge and skills related to learning difficulties & disabilities. On average, they demonstrated their ability to do this. We held a refresher workshop at Gulu Town Primary School and Gulu Prison Primary School and both schools shared their proposed list of Inclusive Education Committee (IEC) members. When schools closed again in June, we continued our communication with the head teachers via phone calls and occasional visits to their offices.
- Partner schools 2020: We continued our collaboration with the 3 primary schools we started a partnership with at the start of 2020: St. Joseph's Primary School, Mary Immaculate Primary School and Christ the King Demonstration Primary School. During the first half of 2022,



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we restarted our weekly lesson observations, although we had to reduce the frequency at 2 of the schools in quarter 2. We held a progress tracking workshop with the teachers at St. Joseph's Primary School and a workshop on Individualized Support Plans at all 3 schools. The administrators shared a proposed list of their IEC members. During the second half of the year, we had to continue communicating with the head teachers via phone calls and visits to their offices, due to the closure of schools.

- ODII: In 2022, we completed all video scripts and filmed all 9 sessions of the Optimizing the Development of Inclusive Instruction blended training package for teachers. We engaged a video editor to edit the video sessions and a graphic designer to design the work book. We received a first edited version of video session 1, shared our feedback and are waiting for the final version.
- Every Child Can Learn podcast: Episode 1-6 were translated to Acoli and recorded and our team added episode 7-10, in both English and Acoli. The episodes were shared with the various distribution points (primary schools, individual teachers, City & District Education Offices, radio stations, music libraries) and were uploaded on our website ([www.backupuganda.org/learning](http://www.backupuganda.org/learning)). We purchased recording equipment and started handling the recording and editing processes internally.
- Radio Maria: Thanks to a partnership with the University of the Sacred Heart Gulu (USHG), we held 4 radio talk shows on Radio Maria about dyslexia, dyscalculia, AD(H)D and autism.
- Frostig: Throughout the year, we held weekly video calls with the Frostig team in Pasadena, California, USA. During quarter 4, these turned into bi-weekly calls because of the school closure in Uganda. Thanks to Frostig, we recruited 2 new trainees under the second cohort of our Frostig Traineeship Program and purchased recording equipment for the ODII video sessions. During the calls, we shared about teaching and learning during the pandemic, the progress of our trainees and of ODII, and the preparations for the sales of Every Child Can Learn t-shirts in the USA.

### Challenges

- Partner schools 2018 & 2019: We were unable to hold a refresher workshop at Kasubi Army Primary School.
- Partner schools 2020: The turn-up for the first teachers workshop was lower than usual, since not all teachers had returned to school yet. The head teachers of Mary Immaculate Primary School and Christ the King Demonstration Primary School requested us to reduce the frequency of our lesson observation visits, which we accepted. Instead, we tried to observe as many teachers as possible during the few visits we were allowed to do.
- All partner schools: Since schools closed again in June and the announcement of the reopening date delayed, we could not continue any of our scheduled in-person activities, including establishing the schools' IECs. The delay in announcing the reopening date prevented us from drafting a work plan for 2022 before the end of the year.
- ODII: The filming process was interrupted by rain and background noise, the design of the work book has not yet been created by the graphic



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designer, and the editing of the video sessions is taking longer than expected, which has delayed the testing of the package with teachers. The closure of schools was another factor in this.

- Every Child Can Learn podcast: Translating and editing new episodes took more time than expected, leading to fewer episodes being recorded than planned. Tracking the distribution and impact of the episodes proved to be challenging, as most distribution points did not use the tracking sheet as requested, many parents did not have memory cards in their phones that could hold the episodes, other parents started losing hope in the reopening of schools, the teachers who volunteered to distribute the episodes were busy with other activities, and potential listeners did not come to the radio stations to pick up the episodes. We had planned to share episode 11 in December, but our guest was unavailable due to a last-minute change in schedule.
- Radio Maria: We frequently received a late notice from USHG before the radio talk shows took place.
- Frostig: Both Frostig trainees in the first cohort left the traineeship program in quarter 1 for personal reasons. Due to the closure of schools, the second cohort of trainees did not participate in training sessions as much as we would have liked. Challenges with the t-shirt supplier and Frostig's website delayed the start of the Every Child Can Learn t-shirt sales.

#### Way forward

- ◆ Partner schools 2018 & 2019: At the start of 2022, we will create a work plan for each school, including termly follow-up lesson observation visits and 3 IEC meetings. We plan to complete our collaboration with these 5 partner schools in 2022.
- ◆ Partner schools 2020: At the start of 2022, we will create a work plan for each school, including 6 workshops for teachers and administrators, bi-weekly lesson observation visits, 3 learning & evaluation meetings, 3 parents meetings, 3 community meetings and 3 IEC meetings. We plan to complete our year of training with these 3 partner schools in 2022, followed by a year of monitoring in 2023.
- ◆ ODII: In 2022, we plan to complete the content and lay-out of the work book and the editing of the video sessions. We aim to test each session with at least 1 primary school to help us improve the content and presentation.
- ◆ Every Child Can Learn podcast: Next year, we aim to create and share a new episode on a monthly basis. When schools reopen, we will share all existing episodes in English and Acoli with our partner schools. We plan to review and improve our distribution strategy, for example by sharing the episodes on radio stations and by playing episodes on a speaker at Gulu main market.
- ◆ Radio Maria: With permission from USHG, we will play the podcast episodes on Radio Maria as listeners can call in to ask questions. We plan to create new content for live talk shows, for example by including teachers, and to have USHG share a written communication with the radio station to inform them of our schedule, while sharing our content directly with the station.
- ◆ Frostig: We will continue connecting with the Frostig team on a (bi-)weekly basis, while actively involving the Frostig trainees. We intend to launch the sales of the t-shirts as early in 2022 as possible. The third cohort of trainees will start in April 2022.

## Progress at Primary Teachers Colleges



### Successes

- Gulu Core PTC: In 2021, we were able to hold 1 workshop for 20 of the PTC's tutors on progress tracking and Individualized Support Plans (ISPs), 4 workshops for 79 student teachers in year 1 including an introduction to learning difficulties & disabilities, progress tracking, ISPs and dyslexia, and 1 workshop for 36 student teachers in year 2 on dyslexia. We followed up on the student teachers in year 2 during their school practice in the first half of the year and held a learning & evaluation session with them to discuss the successes and barriers they had been experiencing while teaching inclusively. When the PTCs closed from June to November, we continued to stay in touch with the deputy principal via phone calls and visits to his office.
- Christ the King PTC: We started 2021 with an introduction to learning difficulties & disabilities workshop for 12 tutors. With 70 student teachers in year 2, we completed workshops on dyslexia, dyscalculia, AD(H)D and half of the content on autism. We followed up on them with lesson observations during their school practice and discussed their successes and barriers while using their new knowledge and skills in a learning & evaluation session. Just like at Gulu Core PTC, we stayed in touch with the deputy principal through phone calls and visits to her office while the PTCs were closed.

### Challenges

- Gulu Core PTC: The closure of PTCs affected all our planned activities, including workshops and lesson observations with the tutors and student teachers. It was challenging to connect with the tutors and student teachers during the closure, as many student teachers in particular were not using digital means. While workshops were ongoing, the student teachers in year 1 often showed up late due to a late start of their lunch and the PES tutor did not participate in any of the workshops. We have not yet been able to set up the IEC for this PTC.

- Christ the King PTC: Just like at Gulu Core PTC, the closure of PTCs had a significant impact on our activities at Christ the King PTC, pausing our plans from June to November. We were not able to have more workshops with the tutors, as the turn-up for the second workshops was too low to continue and the closure started soon after. The tutors were too busy to allow us to hold lesson observations with them. We did not have any activities with the student teachers in year 1, as their lesson started late in the year and the closure stopped them again. With the student teachers of year 2, we had to postpone the second half of the autism session due to the start of their school practice. The PES tutor did not participate in the workshops with the student teachers. While the PTCs were closed, it was challenging to connect with the tutors and student teachers, since they had moved to their homes and did not all use digital means of communication. We have not been able to establish the IEC yet. When we hoped to continue our activities in November, the administration requested us to postpone all activities to 2022, because they were busy preparing the student teachers for their exams.

#### Way forward

- ♦ At both PTCs, we plan to resume all our activities when the new school year starts in January 2022, starting with a detailed work plan to share with the administrators. The activities will include the remaining workshops and lesson observations with the student teachers and tutors, additional learning & evaluation sessions and establishing an IEC at each PTC.

## Networks & Collaborations

### Quality & Content Working Group Gulu

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.





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#### Successes

- In 2021, the Working Group held 6 meetings, all in person and hosted by Backup Uganda at The Innovation Village.
- The Working Group had 2 different chairpersons this year, plus 2 meetings chaired by various members when the chairperson was unavailable at that time.
- Members held 3 radio talk shows on Radio Rupiny and MegaFM about how to guide children learning from home and the reopening of schools. Representatives from the District and City Education Offices joined for 2 of the talk shows.
- Members joined hands in requesting for permission to continue small-group learning activities during the closure of schools and received permission from the District and City Education Offices.
- The Working Group prepared advocacy efforts towards the reopening of schools, which were no longer needed when the reopening was confirmed for January 2022.

#### Challenges

- Joint activities were challenging to organize while schools were only partially open, followed by another full closure in June.
- The Working Group had hoped to organize a general strategizing workshop, which was postponed due to the second lockdown and the rising COVID-19 cases.
- Meeting attendance has been unpredictable throughout the year, which increased the workload for regularly attending members and made it challenging to follow up on specific action points assigned to members.
- While chairpersons were meant to rotate every quarter, the Working Group only had 2 chairpersons in 2022 and delayed to find a new one before the end of the year. This affected the last meetings that were meant to be held towards the end of 2022 – they did not take place.

#### Way forward

- ◆ The first meeting of 2022 is meant to take place in January, after which the members can agree to continue on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.
- ◆ During the first meeting of 2022, a new chairperson for quarter 1 will be chosen.
- ◆ As early in 2022 as possible, the postponed general strategizing meeting will be scheduled and held at The Recreation Project.
- ◆ As schools reopen in January 2022, the Working Group plans to connect with the District and City Education Offices about the most constructive ways to support the reopening process, primarily in terms of resources and guidance.



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## Membership of FENU, SNE TWG, EiE SWG, EiE IE Task Team

Since 2018, Backup Uganda has been a member of two 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 & Inclusive Education Department at the Ministry of Education & Sports and other partners in the area of Special Needs & Inclusive Education in Uganda. In 2020, Backup Uganda also joined the Education in Emergencies Sector Working Group (EiE SWG), a working group bringing together the Ministry of Education & Sports and organizations that are active in education in emergency settings, mainly refugee settlements and host communities. Our representative joined the Inclusive Education Task Team (EiE IE Task Team) that falls within this working group as well.



### **Successes**

- ◆ FENU: FENU offered an online option to join a workshop once. Together with a small team working on advocacy towards the reopening of schools, we communicated with FENU's Executive Director about steps to be taken. While the ED engaged stakeholders at Parliamentary level, the rest of the team coordinated input from national and international NGOs in Uganda.
- SNE TWG: Our representative attended 4 out of the 5 meetings in 2021, 2 in person and 2 online. The meetings led to a variety of potential partnerships with other education-based NGOs, including a potential joint application for a grant through the Ministry of Education & Sports (MoES) for an Accelerated Education Plan for lower secondary level for students with disabilities. Our representative made a presentation on the Every Child Can Learn community podcast at the first National Inclusive Education Symposium in December.
- ◆ EiE SWG: Our representative attended all monthly meetings online. At the start of the year, the team completed and distributed a technical guidance note on the school reopening process. Preparations were made to launch a Back To School campaign led by Save the Children.
- ◆ EiE IE Task Team: Our representative attended all monthly meetings online. The Task Team jointly completed and distributed a technical guidance note on inclusive education during COVID-19 (found on [www.backupuganda.org/learning](http://www.backupuganda.org/learning)), nearly finalized an inclusion assessment tool for schools and started on a common framework of action.



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### Challenges

- FENU: All activities in 2021 collided with other activities and our representative was unable to attend.
- SNE TWG: During the first half of the year, all meetings took place in person in Kampala, requiring long journeys for each meeting. The final ToR for the MoES grant related to an Accelerated Education Program for students with disabilities at lower secondary level has not yet been shared. During quarter 4, no meetings took place.
- EiE SWG: Towards the end of quarter 2, the national Back To School campaign had to be postponed when schools closed again. Rescheduling it was delayed by the late communication of the school reopening timeline.
- EiE IE Task Team: Resource mapping exercised delayed due to late feedback from the Ministry of Education & Sports. The MoES SN/IE Department has not yet shared a date for the Task Team to present the technical guidance note, before sharing it with the SNE TWG. Some individual members of the Task Team are inconsistent in taking responsibility for shared tasks.

### Way forward

- ♦ FENU: Our representative will try to attend workshops and meetings held and will continue to request for the option to join online. She will continue to communicate with FENU's ED about general education-related advocacy matters.
- ♦ SNE TWG: Our representative will continue to attend the monthly meetings where possible. We plan to encourage reviving the roll-out of the National Learning Needs Identification Tool and will apply for the AEP grant together with a potential partner organization when the final ToR is shared.
- ♦ EiE SWG: Our representative will continue to attend the monthly meetings and explore potential partnerships with member organizations. We plan to share the Back To School campaign content on our social media channels once it is launched in January 2022. Our representative may start representing the Inclusive Education Task Team in this Working Group.
- ♦ EiE Inclusive Education Task Team: Our representative will continue to attend the monthly meetings and will contest for the position of co-lead in January 2022. We plan to finalize the common framework of action after sharing it for feedback with the EiE SWG and to finalize the inclusion tool.

## Partnerships

To accelerate the spread and use of inclusive approaches in education, Backup Uganda partners with various organizations and private schools, mainly through professional development activities. Since August 2018, Backup Uganda and Geneva Global have been working together within the Accelerated Learning Program for Northern Uganda (Gulu, Amuru, Omoro, Nwoya, Agago, Alebtong, Kitgum and Oyam districts). We train the facilitators on how to identify and support children with various learning difficulties, and guide the coordinators and supervisors on how to help the facilitators in this process. Teach for Uganda has engaged us in training their teaching fellows since 2018. Since August 2020, we have started collaborating with Save the Children within their 3-year Together for Inclusion project (TOFI) at 20 primary schools in Gulu and Amuru. In 2021, we launched Backup On Tour: series of workshops on learning difficulties & disabilities open for individual professionals. In the same year, Sightsavers International brought us on board of a team developing a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) package on inclusive education for in-service teachers in Uganda. Lastly, VVOB welcomed us to train their staff and partners on inclusive education within their projects.



### Successes

- Geneva Global: In February, we trained 20 coordinators & supervisors and 241 facilitators of Geneva Global's speed school program at Gulu Core PTC, Loro Core PTC and Kitgum Core PTC. We held a refresher session on the various learning difficulties with each group, which included the practical application of individualized support plans (ISP).
- Teach for Uganda: A workshop with Teach for Uganda's new cohort of teaching fellows was scheduled for June and postponed to November. In November, we held a 1-day workshop with the 58 fellows in cohort 4, which included an introduction to learning difficulties & disabilities,



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progress tracking, Individualized Support Plans and peer mentoring. All activities went according to plan, the participants actively engaged with the content.

- Save the Children: Under the TOFI project, our Lead Trainer joined the Save the Children team as an expert observer for 2 rounds of observations - 1 in Gulu and 1 in Amuru – and 3 observers meetings in 2021.
- Backup On Tour: On 21 May, we held the first Backup On Tour workshops at The Innovation Village in Gulu. The morning session included 19 professionals working with children, and the afternoon session had 6 participants who work as managers or HR professionals. The sessions were received well, all professionals participated actively.
- CPD course on inclusive education: Our representative joined a team of partners in the development of a CPD course for teachers on inclusive education, led by Sightsavers, together with Kyambogo University and the MoES SNE/IE and TETD Departments. The content has been written and is currently under review.
- VVOB: We organized a series of 3 online workshops (done twice) for the staff and partners of VVOB – 25 participants in total. The sessions covered an introduction to learning difficulties & disabilities, dyslexia & dyscalculia and AD(H)D & autism.

#### Challenges

- Geneva Global: The facilitators are at different levels in their training progress, since they joined the speed school program at different moments. The sessions usually start and end late because of delays with meals. Not all supervisors and coordinators participate actively in the sessions for their facilitators. Field visits have not taken place yet since there is no explicit permission from Geneva Global. Further workshops had to be postponed due to the closure of schools.
- Teach for Uganda: The training scheduled for June had to be postponed to November because of the second lockdown. During the November training, not all training materials were made available by the organizing party and there were slight delays in the day's program due to the large number of participants. Communication from the Teach for Uganda team is scarce and we have not (yet) been given permission to do field visits with the fellows and supervisors.
- Save the Children: The TOFI project team communicates late about upcoming activities, which makes it difficult to book time for their activities in advance to ensure our own project activities are not affected. We have not yet signed a partnership agreement. A meeting was meant to take place to discuss the draft inclusive school inspection tool, but this has not been scheduled yet. All field activities were halted due to the lockdown.
- Backup On Tour: The turn-up for the afternoon session in Gulu was lower than hoped. We had to cancel the session we had planned for parents, as close to no one signed up for it. We had to postpone all further sessions because of the second lockdown and restrictions on



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bringing people together.

- CPD course on inclusive education: The collaborating organizations had various training manuals already in use that needed to be harmonized. Several organizations tried to have their content prioritized over the content from other organizations.
- VVOB: All sessions started late due to the participants joining the call later than scheduled. Attendance reduced during the 2nd and 3rd workshops, as they collided with other activities for the participants.

#### Way forward

- ◆ Geneva Global: Our termly training sessions for the facilitators, supervisors and coordinators are scheduled to start again from January 2022.
- ◆ Teach for Uganda: While it is not yet clear when our next training sessions for the fellows will take place, we hope to schedule field visits to guide the current fellows on inclusive teaching at their primary schools.
- ◆ Save the Children: Further activities, including school observations, will resume when schools reopen. We will continue to ask for a detailed work plan and a partnership agreement.
- ◆ Backup On Tour: We plan to start new rounds of workshops during the school holidays in 2022, starting with the introduction workshop in Kampala, Jinja and Mbarara.
- ◆ CPD course on inclusive education: After the final review of the content, the pilot of the implementation will begin. We hope to find out during quarter 1 what our role in this will be.
- ◆ VVOB: We hope to hold at least 2 more online workshops with the same group of participants and make field visits to the different project sites around the country to guide the teams on implementing inclusive education.

## Research

In 2020, Backup Uganda joined two research initiatives: a collaboration with the University of the Sacred Heart Gulu (USHG), and an advisory role in the DRIVE research project co-led by Gulu University. DRIVE stands for Disabled Refugee students Included and Visible in Education and focuses on experiences of inclusion and exclusion among refugee students, specifically in West Nile and Lamwo.





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### Successes

- DRIVE: All stakeholders have been collaborative so far in the orientation and data collection phase. We started with an orientation visit to Adjumani, followed by data collection through phone calls and more in-person visits. The data collection was completed and several advisory team members helped transcribe interviews, including our representative.
- USHG: A research proposal for a prevalence study of children with learning disabilities in Northern Uganda was submitted to the Spencer Foundation to request for a grant.

### Challenges

- DRIVE: The second lockdown delayed further data collection and forced the team to hold interviews on phone. Some in-person interviews led to low-quality audio recordings and had to be redone during an additional visit to Adjumani.
- USHG: The Spencer Foundation did not accept the grant request.

### Way forward

- ♦ DRIVE: Data analysis will begin in quarter 1 of 2022. Within the coming year, the research report will be finalized and disseminated.
- ♦ USHG: The joint team will use the feedback shared by the Spencer Foundation to improve the research proposal and apply to other fitting opportunities.

## Fundraising in Uganda



### Successes



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- On Tuesday 30 November, we held the second edition of #GuluGivingTuesday in partnership with Lamaro Studio. The event focused on people with disabilities and women entrepreneurs bouncing back from COVID-19. It took place for 1 hour at The Innovation Village and raised a total of UGX 270,000. The event was attended by less than 20 people in person and a varying number of people virtually via a livestream.

#### Challenges

- The livestream started late due to technical challenges. The COVID-19 restrictions did not allow us to invite more than 20 people physically.

#### Way forward

- ♦ We will evaluate the event in quarter 1 of 2022 together with Lamaro Studio and decide on a potential third edition in 2022.