

The Recreation Project Quarter One Report

January 1st - March 31st, 2021



letter from our managing director

Dear friends,

In 2021, we have hit our stride. We closed 2020 just excited to have graduated 60 children from our COVID-19 response Rural Outreach Program. As I write this letter, we have 208 young people currently enrolled in our 15-week program and we are on track to graduate 600 youth by the end of the year—ten times the number we graduated in 2020.

In this report, you'll discover more about our ongoing programs: rolling out our Primary School program, continuing our partnership with the Gulu Remand Home, working with street-connected youth in partnership with a Community-Based Organization, and engaging out-of-school youth in Climbing Club. However in addition to these updates, my hope is that this report allows you to feel even a fraction inspiration that I have felt working with our team so far this year.

I believe that play creates magic. Whether at a primary school with sixth graders or in our forest with corporate clients, play makes us vulnerable; it makes us joyful; it brings us out of ourselves. Play takes ordinary things: rubber bands, pens, string, soda bottles, balls, and teaches us about the importance of asking for help, shows us how to plan ahead, inspires us to be creative. Play allows the ordinary to make us extraordinary.

Our work isn't all play and magic. This quarter, we've taken on the tedious planning, grunt-work, and strategizing that must go into bringing the power of play to kids at scale. This quarter, your support has provided 208 young people and their parents with a magical opportunity. Your support pays for internet, and transport, and new desks, and maintenance for our forest, and printer paper, and staff meetings, and rubber bands, and so many other ordinary things. And yet, when we put all of these ordinary things together, we are able to create the extraordinary transformation you will find within these pages.

Warmly,

Hannah McCandless
Managing Director, TRP



COVID-19 Rural Outreach Program

In August of 2020, The Recreation Project reopened for business. Recognizing the heightened impact that the COVID-19 pandemic was having on young people in rural areas, The Recreation Project launched a Rural Outreach program to bring our resilience education program to youth forced out of school in rural communities. We graduated 60 young people and their families from this program in December.

Mary Blessing, Participant

Mary Blessing, a graduate of the rural outreach program, and her father Zackeo, share their experience.

"Before, she was a hardworking girl," explains Zackeo. "She had culture of reading and doing art. But when lockdown came, she wasn't herself." When TRP's training started, Mary started to change.

"I remembered how to believe in myself," Mary says. "I know how to take care of myself, how to talk to people. I learned how to get help from a friend or elder and not overreact to a problem. I asked my dad to buy me new clothes, but he didn't. At first, I thought of not helping at home to punish him. But I remembered the training and consoled myself. Another time, I told my sister to fetch sweet potatoes and later found she didn't. I got annoyed but I remembered the stress demonstration from the training and I calmed down and asked her why she didn't do the work. She explained she got pricked by thorns, so I helped her remove them and we picked the sweet potatoes together."

"As soon as she started the training, she resumed back into doing her things of arts and reading," says Zackeo. "I've noticed the way she talks to her sister has improved—she talks while smiling. She's met some good friends. I now receive greetings the whole day from her friends and she's shared what she's learned with us at home."

"I did the Connection Dot activity at home with my family," Mary explains, "At first, they thought it was easy and then I explained that before doing anything you have to plan, just like in the game you have to plan and calculate the impacts of your decisions, that's exactly how life is."

"She learned a lot of practical lessons," says Zackeo. "She now guides the kids at home very well. Every day, I come home to find her reading the bible and newspapers. TRP has had a great impact on her and on our relationship."



our model



Play Based Resilience Education

Youth are mobilized in groups of 15-20 and two local youth mentors deliver 10 'Resilience Education' modules designed with Ugandan youth using Human Centered Design.



Over the past ten-years, we have honed a model that provides youth with resilience education through outdoor adventure and play, provides parents/guardians with tools and information to support their youth to fulfill their potential, and invests in laying the groundwork for safe and healthy family and community relationships

Our model is working to empower families and communities to take ownership of their responsibility to invest in youth to prepare them to thrive.

Youth Participants

2017-2021



our program updates

In quarter one, we launched four programs. All of our programs are built around our 15-week model and are adapted to meet unique and specific needs of each group we serve.

Primary School Program

78 Students Enrolled

- Targeting Primary Six students at one partner school
- Weekly training sessions during Physical Education class
- Working with partner schools to train teachers to deliver TRP program independently after three years

Highlight: The head teacher at our first partner school, Gulu Public, has been the best 'early adopter' for our school team! She is enthusiastic about the importance of play in learning and will be a key stakeholder as we grow.

Challenge: Due to COVID-19, delayed reopening, staggered re-entry of students, and uncertain timelines forced our school team to have to be highly adaptable.

Street-Connected Youth

25 Students Enrolled

- Partnering with Community Organization Hashtag Gulu
- Hashtag Gulu delivers vocational training to youth
- TRP delivers weekly resilience education trainings to youth currently enrolled in the Hashtag Gulu vocational trainings.

Highlight: Despite the stigma around working with street-youth, our team has been thrilled with the energy and excitement to change among the youth in this program.

Challenge: Street-connected youth lack stability in life. Regular attendance has been a challenge. Our team has to be flexible in thinking about how we engage 'families' to consider the needs of youth who have fled violent or abusive homes.

Remand Home Program

68 Students Enrolled

- Serving youth awaiting trial at Gulu Remand Home
- Weekly training sessions to all youth
- Additional one-on-one meetings with youth, small group sessions, and referrals for severe mental health challenges.

Highlight: Their new management is enthusiastic about our program and is open to opportunities that have previously not be possible, including bringing their youth to our forest for an excursion.

Challenge: The Remand Home infrastructure is lacking meaning our students and facilitators play in the hot sun during dry season. We're hoping our classrooms at the Remand Home will be available again soon.

Climbing Club Program

37 Students Enrolled

- Targeting out of school youth ages 16-25
- Delivering resilience education and climbing skills weekly

Highlight: We have a handful of young husbands and wives in our program together this year! Participating together offers these young people a rare chance to engage in a fun and meaningful activity together, which we believe can inspire a loving and stable home.

Challenge: We underestimated demand and far more youth than we anticipated enrolled. Eager to accommodate as many as we could, we're operating over budget this term and finding resources to make sure we're maintaining a safe and impactful experience for all.

In 2021, TRP is working with 600 youth in northern Uganda. In Q1, we enrolled 208 youth in our program bringing us 35% of the way to our goal.

208



our highlights



Stakeholder Saturday

At the beginning of March, we kicked off a new tradition: Stakeholder Saturdays. Three times a year, we will be bring together stakeholders to learn about program and work with us to adapt and improve our program. Our first Stakeholder Saturday was a success! We had 23 stakeholders including the district and municipal Sports Officers, a representative from the School Inspector's office, teachers from our current and future partner schools, parents of graduated participants, and staff from the Remand Home and our partner CBO Hashtag Gulu.

Stakeholder Saturdays are not your average stakeholder meeting. We bring stakeholders to our forest and we PLAY. Our stakeholders experience first-hand the same activities we do with our students and quickly realize the power of our program. Following Stakeholder Saturday, our partner school was so inspired that they decided to bring their entire staff and board to TRP for team building in July and the Remand Home staff suggested bringing the youth from the Remand Home to TRP for a field trip at the end of our program—a dream we've had for many years that was never allowed before.

organization updates

How You Can Help

Become a Monthly Donor

- Do you have an interest in investing in our work? Monthly donations are the life blood of small organizations like ours. When you become a monthly donor, you're not only ensuring we can grow our team and plan to expand our programs, you're guaranteeing that we will graduate 600 youth this year.

Network

- Do you have a powerful network? A few times a year, we compile a list of individuals, foundations, and companies that whose passions might resonate with our mission. We then send this list to a group of individuals with strong networks who may be able to facilitate connections for us. If you're interested to receiving our prospecting list and would be willing to make connections for us, reach out to Hannah at hannah@therecreationproject.org.

Gear and Gadgets

- Do you have extra gear or gadgets? We are always interested in second-hand gently used climbing and camping gear, as well as used laptops and tablets. If you have gear or gadgets to spare, reach out to Hannah to coordinate how we can receive your in-kind donation and put it to use in Uganda.

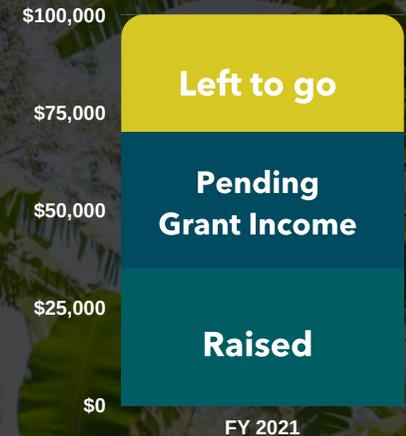
Talents

- Do you have insights to provide to our next strategic plan? In 2021, we will finalize our current strategic plan and develop our next strategic plan. If you have experience in strategic planning or have insights that might help drive our strategic direction, reach out to Hannah to get involved in our strategic planning process.

Fundraising Update

In 2021, TRP has raised \$35,114 out of our \$100,000 goal. Currently, we have \$35,000 in due diligence, leaving us with \$29,886 to raise towards our goal.

Our highlights for quarter one include gaining two new monthly donors and our new partnership with the Bruce C. Abrams foundation.



highlight: TRP Board

We are excited to be opening a new chapter of our TRP board in 2021.

Honoring Board Members



Honoring Jon Mayberry

At the end of 2020, Jon Mayberry stepped down as board chair and welcomed Zach Hoins as the incoming board chair. Jon will continue to serve as an important member of our board. As many of you know, Jon served TRP faithfully for ten years as board chair. His thoughtfulness, example of faith, and steady leadership have allowed TRP to navigate many transitions in the past ten years. Thank you Jon for ten years of incredible service. We look forward to many more years working together!

Honoring Craig Elder

Craig Elder rolled off our board at the end of 2020. Craig has been a valuable asset to the TRP board during his tenure, offering excellent counsel and guidance to our team and board. As the Board Chair of BlueSky Global Ministries, Craig facilitated a meaningful partnership between our two organizations. Craig and BlueSky will continue to be friends and resources to TRP. Thank you Craig!

Welcoming New Board Members

We are thrilled to welcome four new board members to the TRP board!



Lindsay Bingaman

Lindsay Bingaman has over five years of international development experience in East Africa leading programs in public health, peacebuilding, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and gender equality. She is currently the Kenya Program Manager for Women's Global Education Project, and is based in Nairobi, Kenya. Lindsay is currently working towards a Master in Clinical Social Work. Lindsay has a passion for outdoor experiential education and mental health.



Will Wamaru

Will Wamaru has built a career on creating transformative educational experiences for young people. Born and raised in the foothills of Mt Kenya, Will brings a variety of experience as a NOLS Senior Field Instructor, AIESEC alumni, the Co-Founder & CEO of Africa School of Outdoor Leadership & Adventure, and his current position as a faculty member and the Equity and Inclusion Coordinator at Proctor Academy in Andover, NH. Will holds a Master of Business Administration with an emphasis on Social Impact from the Heller School at Brandeis University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Psychology from the University of Nairobi.



Kristin Will

Kristin Will has a clinical doctorate in occupational therapy. Her profession is rooted in human rights, human development, and psychosocial interventions with a strong emphasis on client centeredness and cultural relevance. Kristin moved to Uganda full time in 2017 after several years of traveling there for work to implement inclusive programming with a large grassroots NGO. She is currently back in the United States consulting on strategic planning for a variety of startup and established ventures.



Winnie Auma

Winnie Auma is the VP of Programs at Village Enterprise. Since joining Village Enterprise as a volunteer business mentor in 2010, Winnie served as a field coordinator, assistant country director, and country director. Based in Kampala, Uganda, Winnie holds a BA in Education from Makerere University, a Master's degree in Business Administration and Management. She is also a Harvard Kennedy School Emerging Leaders -- Executive Education, Class of 2019.



**Together, we can
create a world in which
all children fulfill their
limitless potential.**

Our Team:

- Hannah McCandless, Managing Director
- Deogracious Rachkara, School Programs Coordinator
- Denish Acellam, Community Programs Coordinator
- Michael Paito, Finance and Administration Manager
- Janet Alimocan, Day Programs Coordinator
- Rubangakene Godfrey, Day Programs Coordinator
- Janeth Ayaa Alaroker, School Facilitator
- Irene Laguti Lutwala, School Facilitator
- Mark Okot, Community Facilitator
- Jackie Anena, Community Facilitator
- Dickens Akena, Communications Support
- Agatha Isidi Francesca, Facilitator
- Josephine Ogaba, Monitoring and Evaluation Support
- Stephen Otto, Maintenance Assistant