

The Recreation Project Annual Report



2021

letter from our managing director

Dear friends of The Recreation Project,

If I connected with you in 2021, I likely shared an analogy with you that I think illustrates what 2021 meant to our team. It felt like TRP had been this old bicycle that we have been working on—fixing the pedals, replacing the tires, adjusting the seat. Then, in 2021, we finished with a new coat of paint and started flying. For the past few years we have been in a rebuilding phase (in the midst of a global pandemic, no less). We established our first strategic plan in 2019 which was built on goals of investing in our team, a new program model, and systems that were needed for growth. Well in 2021, these investments garnered the most incredible returns.

In these pages, I invite you to bear witness to the fruits of our labor and of your support and stewardship. TRP has grown into a strong and lean team of young people running transformative programs for children and youth, grounded in our community in Northern Uganda. We have built strong partnerships and relationships with our friends and neighbors in Gulu. We have grown our team to include over 20 young people, all passionate about giving other young people access to experiences that change them. And most importantly, we have crafted an incredible program that is both deeply grounded in the needs of our community and expertly informed by evidence-based approaches to youth development. And in 2021, 500 young people and their families graduated from that program.

There is a lot that our team has to be proud of as we enter 2022. I, however, am most proud of them. Their tireless work, endless flexibility, inspiring creativity, and unwavering passion for their work and our students is by far our greatest accomplishment in 2021 and our greatest strength entering 2022.

Thank you for being part of our community and of the magic we make in our forest.

Warmly,

Hannah McCandless
Managing Director, TRP



502

Children and Youth Reached

From Primary Schools, to the Gulu Remand Home, to our climbing wall, to even our facilitators' backyards, we overcame a second COVID lockdown and seemingly unending school closures to graduate over 500 youth from our 15-week life skills and resilience education program.

59

Participants in Youth Camp

We successfully launched our end-of-year youth camp in 2021, which provides program graduates from any term within the year to attend a 3 days overnight camp at TRP to celebrate their growth.



4

New Program Partnerships Launched

In 2021 we launched new partnerships with Gulu Public Primary School, Hashtag Gulu (a community-based organization reaching street-connected youth), St. Jude Children's Home, and Unicef Uganda.

13

New Team Members

In 2021 we created 2 new full time positions for long-time facilitators, hired a new Finance and Administration Assistant, and added 10 new facilitators to our team.

\$14k

Generated in Earned Revenue

Generated in revenue through our social enterprise team-building and corporate retreat activities, despite being closed for a 8-week lockdown.

Keeping climbing in the family

Written by Diana Acaye

In 2021 Shelia and her siblings Daniel and Sandra could not go to school as schools remained closed throughout the year in response to the COVID pandemic. However, this didn't mean they stopped learning.

In May, 15-year-old Shelia met a group of teenagers heading to The Recreation Project for Climbing Club. She was curious about what "Climbing Club" meant and asked if she could join them and after arriving decided to sign up. Over the next three months, she attended TRP's play-based life skills sessions and learned technical climbing skills.

"I learned to socialize with different kinds of people from different walks of life, especially when we are playing the games that in order to accomplish a task successfully together you need to work together or else you fail. I also learned the skill of not worrying and not getting angry if things don't work out the way I expected it to happen".

At home, Shelia's family was noticing a big difference in her behavior and her stories were inspiring to her older siblings Daniel and Sandra. And so when TRP opened the next cohort of Climbing Club in August, Daniel and Sandra immediately signed up.

"The Recreation Project teaches life skills that I have not found in school. I was able to identify my leadership potential through the river-crossing outdoor game and I was able to learn about how we deal with stress through a game called balloon and pin. I think that all youth around Gulu need to experience The Recreation Project," says Daniel.

"Joining Climbing Club is one of the best decision I have ever made. We've created this big family network with all of our fellow participants. It is amazing how outdoor adventure is so transformative, you have to experience it for yourself. I am so happy I got to be part of the life skill trainings and I have to say to all youth, you should also take time and join Climbing Club!" says Sandra.

Beatrice, who is Sandra, Daniel, and Shelia's mother, says she is not only thrilled with the transformation of her children but also the nature of the life skills training that also involved parents and family. "My children have really transformed and my relationship with my children has greatly improved. Parents should not stop their children from coming for the life skills training because I have seen a big improvement with all of my children!"



Program Overview



Play Based Resilience Education

Our 15-week program has been carefully designed to provide young people with experiences of “controlled-adversity” which offer a platform to exercise and discover their resilience skills while building strong relationships with peers, mentors, and caregivers.



Climbing Club

Out-of-school youth ages 15-25 attend weekly trainings which teach technical climbing skills alongside invaluable life skills

129 Youth Graduates

Internal resilience: 49% increase
External resilience: 25% increase
Total Resilience: 36% increase

Primary School

Delivering life skills trainings during physical education classes at partner primary schools

293 Graduates

Internal resilience: 42% increase
External resilience: 24% increase
Total Resilience: 33% increase

Children in Conflict with the Law

Weekly life skills trainings with children in conflict with the law at the Gulu Remand Home

80 Graduates

Due to privacy reasons we were unable to collect M&E data in 2021

Program Highlights for 2021

Youth Camp

As we began our programs in 2021, our programs team felt that we needed to develop a means of following up with our students and providing them with incentives and opportunities to continue investing in their resilience, even after they graduated from our program. And so Youth Camp was born. Youth Camp is a 3-day overnight camp hosted at The Recreation Project, available to students who graduated from our life skills program during the year and who represent the values and transformations we seek to nurture in our students. Attendees get to meet and interact with graduates from other schools and programs, reconnect with their facilitators, share their stories of growth with their parents and other community leaders, and of course, have a blast in the forest.



New (and adapted) Programs

In 2021 TRP launched our Primary School program. At the beginning of the year, we partnered with Gulu Public Primary School to deliver our curriculum as part of the Physical Education classes to all of the students enrolled in sixth grade. We were thrilled with what has proved to be a fruitful partnership with our first partner school. We had anticipated being able to add additional schools, however schools closed in June of 2021 and did not reopen until January of 2022. However, our School Programs team quickly adapted and was able to reach 115 out of school children during lockdown, by allowing facilitators to mobilize children in their neighborhood to complete our program. And in the last few months of the year, we partnered with St. Jude Children's Home to graduate X children. We are extremely proud of our team's flexibility and willingness to adapt our program to reach out of school children and grateful to our wonderful partners at the Vista Hermosa Foundation who supported this important work.

Piloting UPSHIFT with UNICEF Uganda

Recognizing a need for additional programming with our students who show promise or need additional support, The Recreation Project is working with Unicef Uganda to pilot and hopefully scale Unicef's UPSHIFT program as a second stage of our programming for students who have completed our life skills trainings. UPSHIFT is a global Unicef program designed to nurture skills for entrepreneurship and social innovation in young people. Throughout the program, groups of youth identify a problem in their community and use human-centered design to ideate, prototype, and roll out an income generating solution to their program. In 2021 we launched a pilot UPSHIFT program with 40 youth at the Gulu Remand Home.



What's Next at TRP

Strategic Plan for 2022-2023

The overarching theme of our 2019-2021 strategic plan was to emerge from the founder's phase as an effective and efficient organization prepared to impact the lives of youth at scale. If emerge was the theme of the previous strategic plan, the theme of our next strategic plan is 'nourish.'

This two-year strategic plan outlines how The Recreation Project can nourish strong roots, in order to intentionally grow strong branches. Our strategic plan will nourish our team, our programs, our systems, and our relationships to foster intentional and meaningful growth.



Priority 1: Participants

Nourish our participants through meaningful programming that grows with sustainably and intentionally

Priority 2: Relationships

Nourish relationships in Uganda and in the U.S. that foster the operational and strategic growth of the organization

Priority 3: Funding

Nourish sustainable funding, leveraging opportunities in Uganda and in the United States

Priority 4: Team & Culture

Nourish a team and culture that fosters growth grounded in our place, our people, and our values

Priority 5: Systems

Nourish systems that smooth the obstacles of growth

Welcoming our Chief Adventure Officer

Meet Mago-Mulangwa Majid

In 2022, we are thrilled to be transitioning to local leadership in Uganda! In early 2022 we are welcoming a Chief Adventure Officer, Mago-Mulangwa Majid. Mago will take over the day to day management and growth of The Recreation Project in Uganda.

Managing Director, Hannah McCandless, will be transitioning to spend more time in the United States to focus on TRP's fundraising, relationships, and strategy.

We are very excited that this transition will allow our decision making and growth be fully grounded in our community in Northern Uganda.



"I cannot imagine a better fit for this exciting new role than Mago. From his first interview, Mago blew me away with this rich and diverse experience, his creativity, his passion for adventure, and most importantly with his warmth, kindness, and humility. I already feel as though Mago and I have worked together for years. I can't wait to see the exciting things that our team has ahead as Mago and I lead The Recreation Project together."

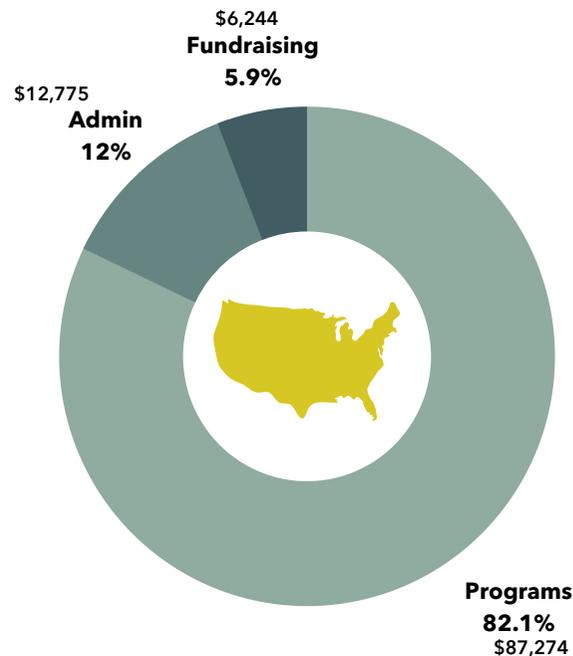
Hannah McCandless

Financials

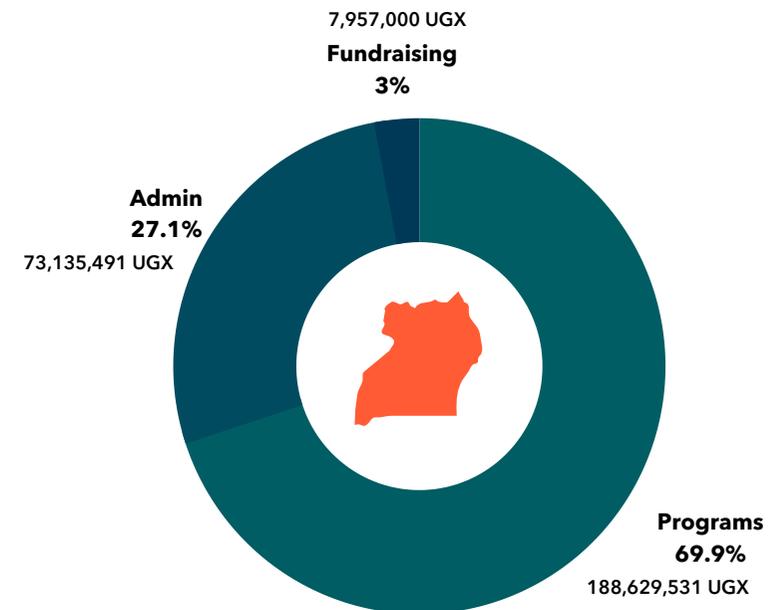
In 2022, TRP's fundraising strategy is built around thriving, instead of surviving. For the first time, we are setting audacious fundraising goals to secure funds that not only allow us to stay afloat in the current year, but give us the confidence to set goals and work towards our vision in the years to come. Our goal is to raise over \$150,000 in 2022 to meet our 2022 needs and to have 50% of our 2023 budget in the bank by the end of 2022.

In 2021, thanks to our generous community, we raised more money than any year in our existence and we look forward to maintaining that momentum. In 2022, with the addition of our Chief Adventure Officer, we intend to grow the proportion of our funds mobilized locally in Uganda through our social enterprise activities delivering team-building and adventure experiences to paying clients.

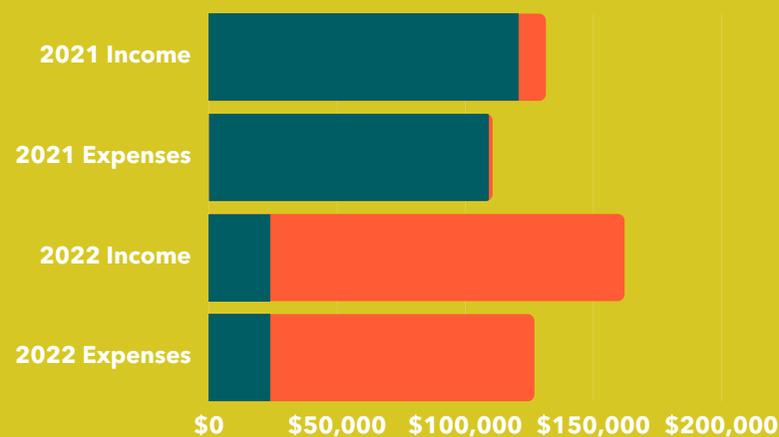
U.S. Finances



Uganda Finances



Income vs Expenses (2021- 2022)



2021

- Income Budgeted: \$131,334
- Income Actual: \$120,785
- US Income: \$106,590
- Uganda Income: \$14,194
- Expenses Budgeted: \$110,531
- Expenses Actual: \$109,042

2022

- Income Budgeted: \$162,025
- Income Actual (to date): \$23,927
- Expenses Budgeted: \$126,854
- Expenses Actual (to date): \$23,756 (includes Uganda operating funds through March)



Thank you!

A special thank you to our partners:



Bruce C. Abrams
FOUNDATION

