



YOLRED

ANNUAL REPORT

2022

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MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

"In September 2015, 193 world leaders committed to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a universal call to action to poverty, protect the planet, and ensure all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

Nearly eight years ago, there has been a confluence of global crises putting this ambitious agenda in jeopardy. COVID-19, Climate change, conflict, surges in the cost of living, and weakening international cooperation are compounding to pause or even reverse development progress.

Yet there is reason to be hopeful, to press ahead with renewed purpose and urgency, to adapt to the ever-changing normal, and to work together to overcome challenges and to seize emerging opportunities to address community adaptive problems.

Despite the challenging context, I continue to be inspired by the energy and commitments of organizations across every continent and sector who work tirelessly each and every day so that every former child soldier and the disadvantaged war-impacted communities live in a safe and peaceful environment.

By showcasing progress across the priority initiatives of our partnership during 2022, and the related achievements of partners, this report shows us how progress continues to take place through our work.

Although there is momentum and action, the enormity of the task to end all forms of violence among us remains, particularly at a time of economic uncertainty constraining government budgets for domestic and international support. As a community, we need to take a long view of change and draw encouragement and confidence from the collective progress being made.

Whenever possible, it would be great to recalibrate our approach. The new partnership management should agree to have new operational arrangements in place to allow us to build on the partnership and maintain progress on the priority initiatives that prioritize what is best for the war-impacted communities in Northern Uganda.

In a nutshell, let me take this opportunity to thank the Staff, our Partners, Donors, and the Governing Body members for their collaboration and tireless effort to make our community a safe and secure environment to live in".

Youth Leaders for Restoration and Development (YOLRED) is a platform for former child soldiers and other victims to support each other in creating meaningful, productive lives. We are a registered indigenous NGO in Uganda that is designed, built, and run by formerly abducted child soldiers. YOLRED leaders deeply understand the problems faced by all victims of the conflict. Our personal experience and understanding allow us to bring compassion and credibility to reintegration and restoration efforts. Through our work, to engage with hundreds of other former combatants as well as partners from a wide range of organizations, we can design and provide real, sustainable solutions for war-impacted youth in Northern Uganda. We know that a peaceful, just and unified Northern Uganda can be a reality when all young people, especially those who have been left behind, can live and work together in strong communities.

YOLRED's headquarters is based in Gulu, Northern Uganda, which allows us to reach out to our beneficiaries with ease.

Our Vision

"Ensure severely traumatized young people of Northern Uganda living a just, peaceful, and productive life".

Our Mission

To help severely traumatized young people of Northern Uganda to become physically and psychologically healed and able to initiate and sustain their livelihoods.

Our Values

Commitment to humanity, Accountability, Integrity, Teamwork, and a Culture of trust.

Our Work

During this strategic period 2021 – 2025, we strive to realize a society where people are engaged, live in peaceful and just communities, have sustainable livelihoods, and lead productive lives. This is realized through YOLRED's four thematic areas of program intervention: Peacebuilding, Sustainable livelihoods, Research, and Education.

Beneficiaries

Our work aims to benefit the war-impacted people in northern Uganda including persons living with disabilities, those living in poverty, and the vulnerable communities in rural and urban areas. Specifically, the primary beneficiaries include formerly abducted persons and their children, Children born of war, Vulnerable persons, Youth, child mothers, and Persons with Disabilities.

EDUCATION

SUPPORTING VICTIMS BY PARTICIPATING IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

In 2022, Uganda reopened schools after 2 years of closure because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. YOLRED was therefore, with the support of MAPS and ISP, able to reintroduce their beneficiaries to school. In total 36 girls and 28 boys were supported throughout the year with school fees payment, scholastic material, and mentorship. Parents could also benefit from support from our psychosocial work team for individual, couple, or family counseling and psychotherapy.

85% of the children were promoted to the next class at the end of the year. Unfortunately, some of them had difficulty keeping up... It can be understood that they had been out of school for quite a long period and their familial context can't allow them to be learning from home so easily. However, we are delighted to see that all the children we supported were able to attend school throughout the year.

Parents were thankful that their children were supported. They also organised themselves in a savings group to anticipate the next year's payment, and they were relieved of the burden of paying on child's school fees. They concentrated on improving their income-generating activities. Some of them observed quick progress in their children's skills, among others with English. Most of our beneficiaries do not speak English and are now very proud of their children.



APPRENTICESHIP

EMPOWERING CHILDREN BORN OF WAR

In January 2022, YOLRED was given the opportunity by the CBOW organisation to pilot a reinsertion project for CBOW. For 6 months, YOLRED's staff hosted a young woman as an apprentice. She was born in captivity and grew up with her parents in Omoro District. She was able to finish her Ordinary Level at Secondary School.

During her apprenticeship, she was introduced to the basic tasks of being an administrative assistant and saw a lot of impact on her private life. She was able to see new job opportunities, gather new transferrable skills, and see her socio-economical life improve.

As the results of the project were fruitful, YOLRED got an additional grant to train the apprentice for one year. In addition to the office work that she keeps on doing, she also enrolled in professional training leading to the award of a Certificate at the East African Institute for Management Science where she learns about records keeping and management.

It is with a lot of joy that YOLRED's staff sees her improving every day and gaining confidence in her work.

While she is initiated to keeping the office premises, welcoming clients, and beneficiaries, managing the reception, managing stocks and giving accountability, she evolves in a caring environment where she can seek counselling.



APPRENTICESHIP

TESTIMONY OF ANENOCAN STELLA ODONG

My name is Anenocan Stella Odong, a child born in captivity during the LRA war. I am 22 years old, and I am the firstborn of a family of five siblings. My parents are separated today, and I grew up mostly with my mother.

By God's grace, I was happy to join YOLRED as an apprentice in January 2022. I also got the chance to go back to school to further my studies since I was a senior four drop-out. I started a Certificate in Records and Information Management. Since I started working with YOLRED I have learned a lot from the organization and in particular administration and computer work. The team is supportive and is very close to me.

My stay in YOLRED gave me the ability to be empowered to support myself and my child. I am also able to extend the support to my mother and my siblings of which I am grateful.

I still hope to continue my studies, even after the apprenticeship so that I can stand on my own and become a great woman that the world will respect.

My sincere gratitude goes to YOLRED and the donors (Children Born of War) for giving us this kind of opportunity so that the community we are coming from sees that we can also do something for ourselves. My prayers are that the Almighty Father gives all of you good health and the ability to support many more children who are like me.

THANKS.

COVID-RESPONSE

THE RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN NORTHERN UGANDA SHOULD BE DISABILITY INCLUSIVE

In 2021, YOLRED carried out research on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Persons with Disabilities (PWD) in Northern Uganda, in collaboration with the University of Bristol. The team started by identifying and contracting 16 co-researchers (12F, 4M) who are themselves affected. They were then trained by the core research team on research methodology and then we organised workshops where participants were able to share their own experiences. Political and institutional stakeholders were also involved, which allowed them to gather diverse and rich opinions.



COVID-RESPONSE (2)

THE RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN NORTHERN UGANDA SHOULD BE DISABILITY INCLUSIVE

The **key findings** of the research made on 16 interviewees are as follows:

1. Limited financial resources impacted access to health institutions and livelihood.
2. Poor educational access for children as there's no access to technologies due to their socio-economic conditions.
3. The implementation of the lockdown was monitored by law enforcement agencies through a lot of intimidation which led to a fear of moving freely although PWDs were allowed to move for health services, which is an important Human Rights violation.
4. Inadequate public institutional structures: lack of knowledge from the medical staff about how to handle treatment with PWD, buildings not thought for persons with reduced mobility, etc.
5. PWD suffer from high stigmatisation by the community. Unfortunately, PWD being at high risk of the virus, they had to follow strictly the recommended procedures and keep themselves away from any social gatherings even familial ones. As persons with high needs, the support they would receive from other community members disappeared and they found themselves struggling alone with their condition. This led to a greater marginalisation of the PWD.
6. Disappointing government response and unsuitable access to information.

Out of these observations and through workshops, the researchers were able to generate the following **recommendations**:

1. The Ugandan public sector should work on reducing the stigma against PWDs, by:
 - a. Implementation of inclusive policies.
 - b. Having a better representation of PWDs at a political level.
 - c. Improve and make healthcare more accessible.
 2. Local and national government structures should support the PWDs by providing affordable housing and livelihood, making education more accessible, writing stronger laws against gender-based violence, and having a better information flow about PWDs.
 3. Police and security personnel should not harass PWDs when they are traveling and use other ways of communicating with them.
 4. The academic world should increase the number of research about PWD and publish it in an accessible format.
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COVID-RESPONSE (3)

THE RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN NORTHERN UGANDA SHOULD BE DISABILITY INCLUSIVE.

More information is available on the [University of Bristol's website](#) and in this [video](#).

Most of the co-researchers were glad to participate actively in this research.

"We have attended so many workshops as persons with disability but of all the workshops, this one has given me some hope." (co-researcher, 36, female).

Some of them shared that they appreciated the feeling of togetherness and interpersonal support it brought. Being in a team allowed them to build new friendships and to feel understood by their peers.

We again thank the team from Bristol University and the co-researchers for the great work that was done, which allows us to raise the voice of PWD after the difficult period of COVID-19.



GLOBAL NETWORK OF RELIGIONS FOR CHILDREN

LAUNCH OF THE RELIGIOUS REGIONAL FORUM

On 14th September 2022, YOLRED together with Arigatou International launched the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) forum in Northern Uganda. Many stakeholders were present such as a member of YOLRED’s board, Sheik Musa Khalil from the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, a Police representative, NGO members, researchers, and a pupil. Regional radio stations also covered this event.



GLOBAL NETWORK OF RELIGIONS FOR CHILDREN (2)

LAUNCH OF THE RELIGIOUS REGIONAL FORUM

This event aimed to establish a long-lasting forum that will help to advocate, coordinate, and protect the rights of children at both regional and national levels. All stakeholders wish to ensure that children are raised in a manner that is morally, emotionally, and spiritually acceptable in society, regardless of their background.

This platform will also help to popularise the GNRC for more visibility of its activities. These activities are meant to advocate for the children's well-being, focusing on girls who need their voices to be raised and who need safer spaces for their good development.



Ordinary Income/Expense

Income	UGX
Donations	240,984,363
Total Income	240,984,363
Gross Profit	240,984,363
Expense	
Yolred Projects	189,618,300
Gifts and Donations	650,000
Employee Costs	48,275,121
Office Operation	23,604,000
Transport and Travel	2,020,000
Financial Cost	1,416,147
Total Expense	265,583,568
Net Income	6,645,067

DONATIONS AND CONTACT

If you wish to support our projects, you can donate through the platform [every.org](https://www.every.org). We are currently fundraising to organize once again the Annual Community Cultural Festival.

This project will utilize the creative art-based therapies of drama, music, film, and dance as a tool for social healing and reintegration of ex-child combatants in war-affected Northern Uganda. It aims to display the marginalized voices and experiences of formerly abducted child combatants during their time in captivity and their lives post-conflict. Additionally, there will be an in-country community cultural festival bringing together 300+ people for a day of creative arts-based performances to facilitate dialogue on several issues related to child-soldiery that were not addressed during post-conflict peacebuilding and remain overlooked even today.

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