

**2023
ANNUAL
REPORT**

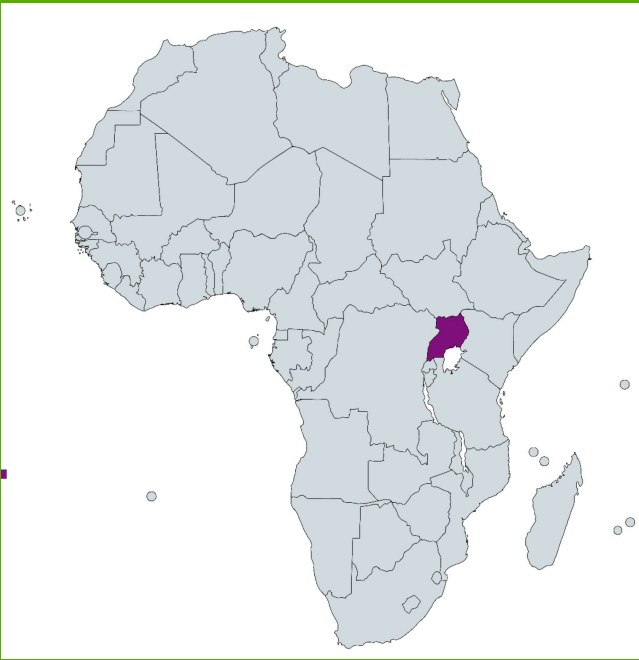

MindLeaps



UGANDA



OVERVIEW



Beautiful Uganda has the largest freshwater lake on the continent, Lake Victoria, as well as the source of the longest river, the Nile. The country hosts the largest refugee population in Africa and the 4th largest in the world – a total of 1.4 million refugees. Refugees are organized in “settlements,” rather than “camps,” as they are given land to cultivate; have freedom of movement; and are allowed to legally work in Uganda. In 2023, MindLeaps worked in the capital city of Kampala and Oruchinga Refugee Settlement in the southwestern part of the country.

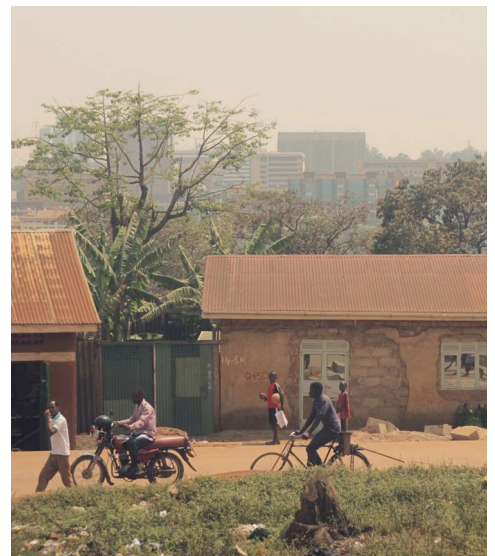
Upward mobility is difficult for youth in Uganda, whether living in refugee settlements or the capital. Across the country, about 45% of primary school children and 30% of secondary school children drop out before completing their education. Systemic educational realities – such as high dropout and low re-enrollment rates – result in stunted individual growth and economic advancement. In settlements such as Oruchinga, this is exacerbated by the few schools and opportunities for employment.

In Uganda, 61% of refugees are under the age of 18 years. MindLeaps programming helps foster a sense of stability, hope, and community for these youth.

MindLeaps works with partner organizations and holds programming at our own studio location in Katwe, one of the urban slums of Kampala. The dense population growth of Katwe started as early as the first part of the 20th century when railway tracks connected it to Western Uganda.

In 2023, **200 Ugandan and urban refugee children** completed our Dance & Data program in Katwe. Another **80 children** completed the Dance & Data program in Kamwokya, another urban slum in the capital, where we partner with **Save Street Children Uganda**. The goal in each location is to boost social-emotional learning skills that help to improve academic performance.

IN KAMPALA



One of MindLeaps' communities in Kampala

ORUCHINGA REFUGEE SETTLEMENT

In Oruchinga Refugee Settlement, MindLeaps worked with **302 children in Dance & Data** and **139 children in Education**.

It is often difficult for families to make ends meet in Oruchinga. There are no regular cash subsidies or foodstuffs provided to the refugees, and although school fees are low, school supplies are an annual cost that families must find a way to afford for their children. Under these challenging circumstances, sometimes children are only able to stay in school if outside support is provided.



MindLeaps students in Oruchinga with their new school supplies

In Uganda, the World Food Program used to give monthly support averaging \$3/person; however, that has now ended. Only individuals with specific needs - like unaccompanied minors and people with disabilities - are eligible.

Our School Sponsorship program helps children who have completed Dance & Data transition into formal education or maintain their enrollment by providing school supplies and tutoring. In Oruchinga, there are only four primary schools for a settlement that houses over 6,000 refugees from Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, and South Sudan. **The sustained involvement and encouragement from the MindLeaps team increases re-enrollment rates despite overcrowded classrooms.**



Students developing teamwork skills



Trainer Cathy and student Steven Mugisha working on the splits

FROM CHILD TO FAMILY

In 2023, the most important achievement in Uganda was **extending our program from the children we serve to their parents and caretakers.** Our goal is to serve the different needs of each family member and advance the family unit as a whole.



Parents holding up certificates for completing the business training

The Family Strengthening Program started this year and serves 50 caregivers in Kampala and 30 parents in Oruchinga Refugee Settlement. This program positions parents and guardians to run income-generating projects that meet the needs of their refugee community.

The Kampala program was made possible by our longstanding partnership with the **United Nations Federal Credit Union Foundation.** The structure of the Family Strengthening Program consists of 6 months of business training and seed fund investments to start small businesses. By the end of 2023, the first nine businesses were already turning a profit.



MindLeaps staff visits a small business of an Ugandan beneficiary

We also introduced the Family Strengthening Program in Oruchinga to build a path towards self-reliance and sustainability. So far, the parents have completed business training, and some have started income-generating projects. Although profits are minimal, it eliminates the support needed from outside organizations like MindLeaps. **Most importantly, it empowers caregivers to believe they can care for and protect their families - even under the circumstances they face living as refugees in another country.**

WHAT'S NEXT?

We are excited to announce a grant from Jewish Helping Hands to fully renovate and expand our studio in Kampala! This will allow MindLeaps to serve children and families, not only through dance and business training, but also by providing meals, regular academic tutoring, and computer classes. Stay tuned for our next LEAP!





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