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The Glamour of the BREW Project: Successes Beyond the Integration of Mental Health in Schools.



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Building Resilience and Emotional Well-being (BREW Project) Success Stories.

Adjumani and Palabek Refugee Settlement.

Windle International Uganda (WIU) is an International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) responsible for managing education programs in humanitarian operations within Uganda. WIU is tasked with the administration of schools, including the recruitment and remuneration of teachers, at pre-primary, primary, and post-primary levels of education for both the refugee and host communities. Furthermore, WIU facilitates infrastructure development through the construction of classroom blocks, latrines, teacher accommodation, libraries, and dormitories, thereby increasing access to quality and equitable education for both female and male pupils and students in refugee hosting districts.

The WIU, with funding from StrongMinds' Uganda (SMU), has taken up the responsibility of implementing a project titled "Building Resilience and Emotional Wellbeing". The project is specifically designed to provide support to learners aged between 12-24 years in both Primary and Secondary Schools at the Palabek Refugee Settlement, Uganda. The objective of the project is to address depression and its signs and symptoms, which impact effective learning outcomes for the students.

The project has been initiated in 14 schools at the Palabek Refugee Settlement and 27 schools at the Adjumani Refugee Settlements, which includes both primary and secondary schools. The project aims to provide support to the learners, enabling them to develop the resilience required to deal with depression and emotional stress.

WIU, in collaboration with SMU, understands the importance of addressing the mental health issues prevalent among refugee pupils and students and is committed to providing the necessary aid to improve their learning outcomes.

Windle International Uganda aims to empower and inspire young people through education. Therefore, it was essential to provide mental health training to volunteer teachers and integrate mental health into the education system to reduce depression among learners. This approach not only improves academic performance, retention, and completion rates but also helps students transition to the next level of education. Typically, schools, parents, and communities are the primary sources of mental health support for pupils and students in Uganda, both in primary and secondary education. However, such holistic mental health support is less feasible in refugee communities.

Working in refugee settlements can be challenging for caregivers and teachers due to the need to earn daily income for survival. However, the BREW project has provided significant support to both teachers and learners, helping to strengthen educational systems in all aspects.

The educational needs of young boys and girls in refugee communities remain a complex issue, particularly regarding their mental health needs. It has come to our attention that such needs are often not adequately assessed or addressed. To this end, WIU has taken meaningful strides in providing quality education to both the refugee and host communities through the provision of requisite scholastic materials, as well as effective teaching and learning methods.

Our topmost priority is to provide a supportive and empowering learning environment for both teachers and learners. We are already seeing positive results from our efforts, which reflect our unwavering commitment to promoting resilience and emotional well-being among adolescent girls, boys, and young women who are refugees..

The successes and stories below are a testament to how the BREW project has transformed the lives and social connections of teachers and learners in both Adjumani and Palabek Refugee Settlements.



My name is Acen Vicky Adong and I am a trained mental health facilitator at Palabek Ogili Secondary School. In March 2023, I received training from Windle International Uganda and StrongMinds under the BREW Project on how to provide group counselling for depressed students using the Interpersonal Psychotherapy model for adolescents. Since the beginning of the first term, I have helped seven groups, comprising of five boys' groups and two girls' groups, to recover from mental distress and develop coping abilities to remain free from depression. Through the counselling sessions, these students have developed coping abilities to remain free from depression.

I'm filled with gratitude for the BREW project, which has transformed the lives of my students. Through therapy, students who were once struggling in school found hope and motivation to continue. Attendance and performance have improved significantly, and thoughts of giving up have been replaced with a newfound sense of purpose. I am inspired by the positive impact this initiative has had on my students and am grateful to be a part of it.

The learners' compassionate initiative of creating a mental health club to assist peers battling depression is truly inspiring. In my role as an educator, this experience has been an eye-opener for me. It has taught me to delve deeper into my students' behavior and understand the underlying reasons behind it. This has helped me to be more patient and empathetic towards them, and has significantly improved my teaching approach. As a result, I have developed strong relationships with my learners, and I am proud of the progress they have made. I find immense satisfaction in my work, and I look forward to continuing this journey of helping my students succeed.

As an educator, I have come to appreciate the power of creating a safe space for learners to share their thoughts and feelings without the fear of being judged or punished. I feel fortunate to be surrounded by colleagues who have also embraced this culture. Moreover, I have learned to manage my own stress effectively and to extend that same help to other members of my community.

A number of parents have expressed their appreciation for the therapy sessions that have led to positive changes in the behavior of their children. Mental health has played a vital role in creating a perfect and conducive learning environment in my school, which every child desires to be a part of. I hope that WIU and StrongMinds continue to provide this much-needed service for our learners, as it is highly motivational and appreciated by all.

I have had the privilege of witnessing first-hand the positive impact that therapy sessions have had on the behavior of many of my students, and their parents have expressed their gratitude for the support.





My name is Douglas Oroma. I am a secondary-trained teacher and mental health volunteer currently teaching at Palabek Ogili Secondary School in Lamwo District, Uganda. Last year, I attended a one-week training organized by Windle International Uganda and StrongMinds. The training focused on mental health and mainly on how to handle depressed learners in school.



Thanks to the knowledge I attained, I have been able to support almost 100 students who were depressed by conducting IPT-G sessions. Furthermore, the training has helped me provide support to some of my friends who have experienced depression. I have also learned how to keep confidentiality when dealing with such cases.

I appreciate Windle International Uganda, especially the Lamwo team, and StrongMinds for imparting this free knowledge to me. As a teacher trained in handling depression, I have observed great improvements in the students I've supported. For instance, their self-confidence and self-esteem have improved, discipline has improved, concentration in class has improved, school attendance has increased, and they have regained hope. They have even started helping their friends who are going through similar challenges. Lastly, I want to express my gratitude to Windle International Uganda with support from StrongMinds for bringing hope back to these learners by training us and supporting the facilitators on handling mental illness called depression.

The improvements made by the supported learners are truly remarkable! Their dedication and hard work have paid off, and it's clear that they are on a path to success. Keep up the amazing work!

A 12-year-old boy from Akanyo Primary School shared that he arrived in Uganda in 2017 and settled in West Nile's Moyo District without his parents. His parents remained in South Sudan. In 2018, he moved to Lamwo District and started studying at Ogili Hill Primary School in P.1 in 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted everything.

In 2021, his grandmother passed away, marking a significant change in his life. He enrolled in the IPT-G sessions, which helped him control himself. As a result, he no longer skips school or stays alone like he used to. He has a younger brother, and both of them are studying, thanks to his efforts to encourage his brother to stay in school.

His name is Kongo Severino, and he is a pupil at Akanyo Primary School.

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''Paul's Journey of Life''

My name is Pi-Rwot Paul, and I am fifteen years old. I am currently studying in P.5 at Akanyo Nursery and Primary School, where I hold the position of Chairperson in the Mental Health Club. Being a part of this club has been a great privilege for me because, without it, I would not have been able to continue my education.

I live in Palabek Kal Sub-County, Lamwo District, where my family has been affected by internal conflicts that led to the separation of my grandmother. As a result, I was burdened with a lot of household chores, such as cooking, fetching water, bathing the young ones, and other domestic tasks. This made me very depressed, and I struggled to concentrate in school.

Despite my challenging circumstances, things took a turn for the better when my mother remarried. My stepfather, who is a pastor, encouraged me to keep the faith and took me under his wing. He asked me about my studies and took me to Akanyo Primary School, where I have been studying for the last two years.

I joined the debating club and the IPT-G, but it was my involvement in the Mental Health Club that really made a difference in my life. Our patron has always advised us not to let our minds be consumed by depression, and I have become a better person because of it. I am proud to have been selected as the Chairperson of the Club, and I would like to express my gratitude to Windle International Uganda for initiating this program in our school.





As a mental health facilitator, Awino Brenda shared her story with gratitude for her friendly and competent supervisor. There were times when her workload at the duty station made her want to quit, but her supervisor's support and encouragement helped her to continue working. As a result, her productivity has increased, and she has started a side business to supplement her family's income, which has been running successfully for two months now.

Brenda is pleased to see that her clients at school, through IPT-G, have better social relationships. They have also become more physically active by participating in football, netball, and athletics. Brenda is happy to note that her clients have adapted well to changes that come their way, attend school regularly, and their academic performance has improved.



Norah, a mental mental health facilitator at Lewa P/s, Adjumani Settlement

Santina, a mental mental health facilitator at Lewa P/s, Adjumani Settlement

Abua Norah and Temaiya Santina, two experienced primary school teachers who have received training as mental health facilitators, are making a positive impact on the lives of adolescents studying at schools within the Adjumani Refugee Settlement in Adjumani District. Using the IPT-G approach, they are providing these young people with valuable tools and strategies to improve their mental well-being and cope with the unique challenges they face as refugees. Through their work, Abua and Temaiya are helping to ensure that these adolescents have the support they need to succeed in their studies and thrive in their daily lives.

The IPT-G program has achieved several remarkable accomplishments, as per their account. One of the most notable achievements is the introduction of new methods for solving problems among pupils and elders, which have brought about significant improvements. Additionally, the program has also led to the development of more effective counseling styles, resulting in a positive impact on the participants' mental well-being.

Notably, Norah shared that the program has helped her to socialize with other people, which has been a life-changing experience for her. She also mentioned that the IPT-G sessions have encouraged her to continue with life even when it seems tough. Furthermore, Norah highlighted that the program has helped her to change her behavior positively, including learning how to keep secrets within her heart. All these successes can be attributed to the IPT-G model's effectiveness in providing much-needed support and guidance to the participants.

Santina's exceptional IPT-G skills are truly inspiring for her fellow educators. Her approach to teaching is both compassionate and respectful, and she has shown that effective classroom management can be achieved through this approach. Her dedication to her pupils is truly remarkable and a shining example for all of us.

IPT-G has been a game-changer for our learners, fostering an environment where they can freely express themselves and build meaningful relationships with their peers and teachers. Through this program, we've seen a marked improvement in their discipline, with reduced instances of fighting and stealing. Moreover, we've witnessed first-hand how IPT-G enables our clients to help one another, sharing their problems and working collaboratively to find solutions. It's truly heartening to see the sense of confidentiality and respect that has emerged within our community, Norah alluded.

One of the most pressing challenges we are currently facing is that despite our best efforts, previously solved problems are resurfacing among adolescents, leading to a sense of frustration and discouragement among them. Upon further investigation, we have identified that the root cause of this issue is the lack of communication with parents and the limited availability of teacher facilitators. With a large number of clients to cater to, the coverage is limited, and there is only so much that can be done to address the individual needs of each child. To address this issue, we propose a two-pronged approach. Firstly, we need to hire more facilitators to ensure that there is adequate coverage for all clients. Secondly, we need to implement better communication strategies with parents and teachers to ensure that they are well-informed about the progress of their children and can provide necessary support. Norah mentioned.



Our goal is to create a supportive environment that fosters positive mental health for children, allowing them to concentrate and excel in their studies. By working together to address this challenge, we can make a significant impact on the lives of children and learners, and ensure that they have the necessary resources to succeed.