

Halifax Gala

Impact Report



The 2021, Chefs for UNICEF Water for Life Halifax Online Auction raised over **\$75,000**.

Children in the least developed countries of the world are some of the most at risk, with as many as half of schools lacking basic sanitation and drinking water services, and 7 out of 10 schools lacking basic handwashing facilities.

Handwashing is key to keeping children safe and schools open, as using soap and water is one of the most effective ways of preventing the spread of disease such as COVID-19.

Thank you for supporting UNICEF's global water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programs that are benefiting hundreds of thousands of children, families and communities in need of this life-saving support.



Uganda

Project Overview

Breaking Down Barriers to Girls' Education

Like in many countries across sub-Saharan Africa, Ugandan children face significant obstacles to obtaining a basic education.

Nationwide, nearly 70 per cent of children in Uganda will drop out before reaching secondary school. And among the 32 per cent who do attend secondary school, less than half are girls.

As girls reach adolescence, they encounter numerous risk factors that can prevent them from continuing on with their education. From inadequate hygienic resources for menstruating girls to high rates of child marriage, early pregnancy and abuse at school, too many girls in their early adolescence – between the ages of 10 and 13 – are simply unable to realize their greatest potential through the power of education.

Girls who drop out of school face exposure to many of the same risk factors that led to their departure: not only are they more likely to be forced into early marriage and early pregnancy, but they are also often subjected to transactional sex and unsafe or illegal work. As a result, they face lifetimes of lost opportunity, social and economic instability and poor long-term mental and physical health outcomes.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the barriers girls face to education – and the threats faced by out-of-school girls in the community –

increased exponentially with the closure of all education institutions across Uganda. With over 12 million learners out of school, including nearly 600,000 learners in refugee settlements, rates of sexual exploitation, abuse and early pregnancy have increased significantly nationwide.

Empowering brighter futures for girls in Uganda

To help more girls remain in school and ultimately complete secondary school, UNICEF is focused on two key interventions with the support of the UNdaunted campaign: Improving the availability of sanitation and washing facilities at schools, and challenging negative gender norms affecting adolescent girls' participation in education.

Both interventions are being delivered in the vulnerable West Nile region, where school attendance and graduation rates are significantly below the national average.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has presented numerous obstacles to the delivery of activities, the team adapted their implementation strategies and continued to drive progress for girls seeking a better future.

None of this work would be possible without your generous support and commitment to improving the lives of girls in sub-Saharan Africa.

Progress Report

Goal 1: Reverse high drop-out rates among adolescent girls by improving the availability of sanitation and washing facilities in 40 schools.

Without access to appropriate sanitation resources in schools – including separate washrooms for boys and girls, handwashing stations and solar-powered water pumps – the start of menstruation can mean the end of education for many girls in Uganda.

With the support of the UNdaunted campaign, UNICEF has made tremendous strides toward equipping 40 schools across the West Nile region with the facilities needed to help girls avoid missing or dropping out of school because of their periods.



Students of St. Peter’s Kyoga Primary School in Isingiro district take turns washing their hands while keeping social distance at a handwashing facility.

Progress to Date

While schools were closed as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, construction of water and sanitation facilities at the 40 schools identified in 2018 were fast-tracked and prioritized.

26

26 schools have undergone improvements to their facilities.

4

Four schools in Arua District are undergoing construction of latrine blocks and water systems.

25

25 School Management Committees (SMCs) were trained on operation and maintenance of facilities.

13,859

13,859 learners were impacted, including 6,014 girls.

A Look Ahead

UNICEF is finalizing the construction of WASH facilities in all 40 schools identified by the project team.

Highlights of next steps include:

All 40 schools will be equipped with new water and sanitation facilities through support from UNdaunted.

10 additional SMCs will receive training on the proper operation and maintenance of the facilities to build community ownership, leadership and sustainability.

An impact assessment study will commence as schools re-open to evaluate the impact of the new facilities on girls’ well-being and education.

Goal 2: Improving the knowledge, attitudes and practices of girls, teaching staff and community members in 550 schools to challenge negative gender norms affecting adolescent girls' participation in education.

In many parts of the world, negative gender norms – including those that undervalue the role of girls in society and prioritize boys' potential – present a major barrier to girls' ability to access and complete education.

While Uganda has made progress toward addressing these harmful norms through policies designed to increase girls' enrollment in school, significant work is required to ensure girls across Uganda are empowered to engage in safe, supportive learning environments.

With funding from UNdaunted and working in collaboration with partners from the education system, local communities and local governments, UNICEF is creating opportunities for dialogue, learning, training and mentorship – all with a goal to reverse negative gender norms and improve girls' participation in education.

Progress to Date

Although COVID-19 restrictions prevented many activities from taking place in person, UNICEF and implementing partners adapted to offer virtual engagement opportunities and leveraged the power of radio to advance community dialogue.

200 200 teachers from two districts received training on gender-responsive pedagogy and safe, healthy schools, for a total of 1,501 teachers engaged since the beginning of the project.

160 160 teachers from 40 primary schools received training focused on addressing violence against children in school.

8 Worked with 8 district local governments to prepare for the safe re-opening of schools, with a focus on addressing the risks faced by adolescent girls.

10,282 10,282 adolescents attended sessions on violence prevention, child marriage, teen pregnancy and other related topics.

28 Organized 28 radio talk shows hosted by adolescents, with a goal to highlight risk factors preventing adolescent girls from accessing education.

2,300 Hosted community dialogues for over 2,300 stakeholders across 24 locations, exploring issues of child labour, child marriage, early pregnancy and sexual reproductive health.

A Look Back

In 2021, UNICEF was focused on deepening impact through the following key activities:

Supporting district local government dialogues with various stakeholders to develop action plans for enhancing girls' access to safe, supportive schools.

In partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), working with teachers and students to address gender norms preventing girls' participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects.

Continuing community outreach efforts focused on adolescent health and safe schools.

Reviving and supporting school clubs and out-of-school clubs that were forced to shut down during the pandemic, with a focus on linking out-of-school adolescents with formal and informal learning pathways.

Completing the development of a standardized life skills toolkit in partnership with the MoES, which offers a comprehensive guide on supporting adolescents in their transition to adulthood.

Learnings

Recognizing the importance of community feedback on the design and maintenance of the sanitation and washing facilities being installed at schools, the team will continue to seek insights from students, parents and SMCs to ensure the facilities fully meet their needs.

To maximize the impact of interventions focused on reversing harmful gender norms, the team recognizes the crucial importance of providing safe spaces for adolescents to share feedback. With this in mind, UNICEF is committed to continuing to safely engage adolescents in the design and delivery of interventions.

The team has also identified a need to provide refresher training to teachers once schools fully re-open to help them support learners who may have experienced trauma during school closures.

Finally, the partners are committed to engaging more frequently with community and religious leaders as well as local councils to build awareness about barriers to education, and to support them to play a stronger role in promoting change.

Insights from John Omara of Straight Talk Foundation

Since the beginning of the UNdaunted program, UNICEF has been working in close partnership with Straight Talk Foundation (STF) – a grassroots non-profit focused on empowering young people in Uganda to safely transition to adulthood.

As a leader in community engagement, STF has been crucial to the implementation of UNICEF’s UNdaunted goals. The two partners work closely together to develop programming, implement activities and achieve life-changing results for adolescents in Uganda.



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Primary Seven pupils of Ediofe Girls School Arua City during a class session.

Here, we're pleased to share a recent interview with John Omara, an STF project officer.

In your opinion, what has been the most impactful aspect of this intervention so far?

The intervention has been created not only to reach adolescents regarding key issues, but also to allow adolescents to actively participate in decision-making in their communities.

When the COVID-19 pandemic was reported in Uganda, we had to re-think how to adapt the platform to reach adolescents. We decided to use a peer education approach and use radio talk shows to continue reaching out to young people across West Nile. Through the peer education sessions, adolescents have been opening up to their peers about the challenges that they are facing during COVID-19 and are supporting one another to report cases of violence against children and engage in healthy practices.

What is a highlight from the past year?

During the intervention, I met a 15-year-old girl from Arua Islamic Secondary School named Deiya. Deiya had joined a new peer group and was engaged in a sexual relationship and paid sex work. She was performing poorly in school and did not listen to her parents or her teachers.

However, at the beginning of the 2020 school year, before schools were closed due to COVID-19, Deiya's peers convinced her to join the school club supported by UNICEF and STF. Through the club, Deiya made new friends and she became more involved in school, leading her to leave behind some of her negative behaviours. She was elected the Secretary of Sports as well as the Assistant Games Prefect. In only a few short months, Deiya's academic performance improved and she became a role model for her peers.

Deiya's story inspired me and made me realize that once you understand an adolescent's past and provide a positive environment for them to engage in positive activities, then behaviour change is possible.

Using Drama to Ignite Change

Each week, members of the Awindiri community club – founded by UNICEF and Straight Talk Foundation with support from the UNdaunted campaign – visit markets, schools and places of worship to educate community members about issues affecting adolescents.

The members, themselves adolescents who have been trained as volunteer peer educators, have engaged a significant number of people – everyone from students to parents to community leaders – in conversations about the risk factors facing young people in Uganda today.

And while the majority of their efforts focus on creating dialogue and encouraging community members to help adolescents overcome the obstacles they face, they've recently started using a different tactic to get their message across: drama.

Through dramatic skits addressing a range of topics, including teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and even the importance of adhering to COVID-19 restrictions, the club members have found that both youth and community members are more engaged and more likely to remember what they learned.

Demand for their performances is on the rise, with invitations coming in from places of worship, district functions, radio shows and, recently, a private Rotary function.

Through the power of creativity and commitment, these young people are igniting conversations, building knowledge and fuelling change – all with the support of UNdaunted.



Spencer Amanicia, chairperson of Awindiri Straight Talk Club in Arua City, leads a dialogue session on teenage pregnancy and early marriages at Ediofe Girls School. Through these dialogues and drama, adolescents get an opportunity to discuss issues that concern them, as well as find solutions to address them.

Thank you for your support!

The provision of water at schools is one of the highly effective practices in increasing access and learning outcomes, especially for girls.

Together, we are helping to break barriers to girls' education, supporting girls to fulfill their potential and transform their communities.

Thank you Halifax! During the 2021 Chefs for UNICEF Water for Life Halifax Online Auction, 15 water pumps and 11 water for life bundles were sold. Each water pump can provide safe water to a community of 150 people for up to 10 years.

Thanks to your support, 2,250 people can have access to safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene for up to a decade. Through maintenance training for community members, water pumps will remain functional to continue to serve those who need them the most.

For 30 years, the Chefs for UNICEF Water for Life Gala in Halifax has supported the greatest needs of children around the world. **Thank you for your tremendous support.**

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Students raise their hands in class at Umwia Primary School in Adjumani District, Northern Uganda. The school is benefiting from UNICEF supported WASH software and hardware and adolescent development program.