

UPSHIFT  
UGANDA

UMÖJA

FOR PEACE AND RESILIENCE

ANNUAL REPORT | 2023

## UMOJA for Peace and Resilience

Is a Youth Refugee-led nonprofit organization established in 2019, dedicated to building sustainable and resilient communities.

We believe in the transformative potential of refugees to drive positive change within their communities.

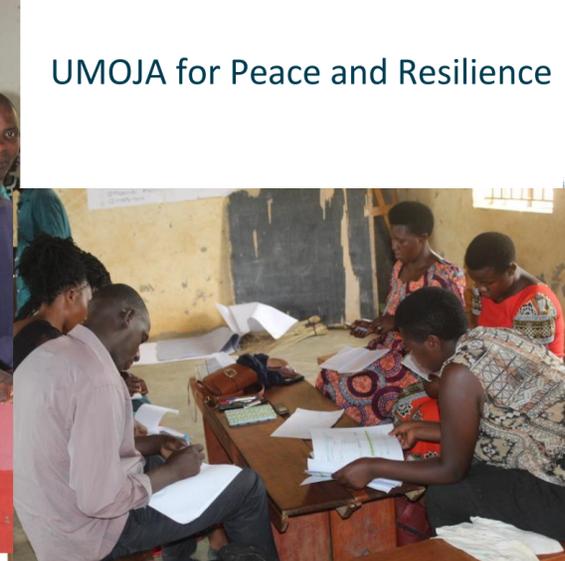
### Our mission

Is to empower forcibly displaced individuals by providing essential tools, skills, and resources that enhance their lives and foster sustainable self-reliance.

### Our vision

A world where refugees not only overcome the challenges of displacement but thrive with resilience and self-reliance.





TOGETHER



FOR



SUSTAINABLE



COMMUNITIES



RESILIENT





## Executive Director's message

Dear Supporters and Friends of UMOJA,

I am immensely proud of the transformative impact UMOJA has made in 2023, advancing to our commitment to empower forcibly displaced individuals and build sustainable and resilient communities. This year, our focus was on accelerating economic empowerment, promoting refugees' integration into Uganda's workforce, and fostering vital mental stability among refugees.

In 2023, UMOJA achieved extraordinary milestones. We empowered over 1,000 individuals with the skills, tools and opportunities needed to thrive as social innovators, entrepreneurs, and contributors to their communities. Additionally, over 1,000 created sustainable jobs for refugees, significantly enhancing economic stability and prosperity. Furthermore, we provided crucial mental health support to thousands of women and men, helping them overcome trauma and depression.

Our collective efforts have not only changed lives but have also laid the foundation for sustainable change. Through your generous support, we've empowered thousands of refugees to rebuild their lives with dignity and purpose.

I extend my deepest gratitude to our dedicated team whose unwavering commitment and tireless efforts have been pivotal to our success. Together, we've achieved remarkable outcomes that have exceeded our expectations. To our donors and partners, your steadfast support has been instrumental in driving our mission forward. Your belief in our work has enabled us to expand our impact and reach more people in need.

As we look to the future, our vision remains clear and ambitious. The demand for our services continues to grow, and we are determined to expand our reach and deepen our impact in the coming year.

I invite you to join us on this journey of empowerment and resilience. Together, let's continue to build stronger communities where refugees thrive and contribute meaningfully to society.

Thank you for your unwavering support

throughout 2023. Your partnership has been transformative, and I am excited about the possibilities that lie ahead as we strive for even greater achievements.

Warm regards,



**Isaac Ashige**

Executive Director

UMOJA for Peace and Resilience

2023 AT A GLANCE

Over **1,000** People empowered.



**248** Social Innovators.



**80** Obtained Work passes.



**472** Entrepreneurs supported.



**250** Equipped with Vocational Skills.

Over **1,000** Jobs created.



**1,000**



Tupendane, a Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA) group in Rubondo Zone, Nakivale Refugee Settlement. One of the groups that participated in the "Moving from Ideas to Action" program. The members of this group used to collect their savings from bricklaying work.

## Empowering Refugees through sustainable Business development

### Accelerating Economic Empowerment for Refugees in Nakivale Settlement.

In Nakivale Refugee Settlement, refugees face substantial hurdles in establishing and developing businesses due to a deficit in essential entrepreneurship skills, resources, and access to tools. Recognizing these challenges, UMOJA launched the "Moving from Ideas to Action" Entrepreneurship program in 2019, aimed at providing refugees with the vital support needed to succeed as entrepreneurs.

### Moving from Ideas to Action

is a robust initiative that includes comprehensive components such as entrepreneurship workshops, mentorship sessions, and business incubation programs. Since its inception, the program has successfully empowered over 5,000 individuals, initiated over 800 businesses that not only sustain their livelihoods but also positively impact their communities.

### This year

our strategic focus has been on empowering Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) groups. These groups, already equipped with initial capital from their collective savings, lack the necessary entrepreneurship skills to effectively utilize these funds and launch sustainable enterprises. While our goal was to engage 30 VSLA groups, each comprising a minimum of 20 members, we successfully empowered 27 groups through targeted training and support.

The impact of our efforts is evident, as 18 of these empowered groups have utilized their savings to establish micro-businesses, contributing to local economic development and fostering community resilience. Our ongoing commitment includes providing continuous mentorship and facilitating connections with experienced professionals in various industries, ensuring that these startups receive the guidance necessary for long-term

sustainability and growth.



Team members of the Kashojwa VSLA group during the "Moving from Ideas to Action" training workshop.

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***Through Moving from Ideas to Action, UMOJA remains dedicated to empowering refugees with the skills, resources, and opportunities they need to build prosperous businesses and contribute meaningfully to society.***



Young refugees engaging during the U-innovate bootcamp.

## Youth-Led Innovation for Social Impact

Equipping young people with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to address pressing community challenges.

This year, UMOJA launched the "U-Innovate" program, designed to equip young people in Nakivale Refugee Settlement with essential 21st-century skills to address pressing community challenges. This initiative empowers youth to catalyze meaningful change through innovation, tackling critical issues within their communities.

**U-Innovate** unfolds in three distinct phases: a rigorous 5-day social innovation training bootcamp, followed



*Through U-Innovate program. UMOJA is empowering young people in Nakivale Refugee Settlement to drive tangible change. By equipping them with the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills and hands-on experience, we are enabling them to address critical community challenges directly and develop impactful solutions with enduring effects.*

by a comprehensive 2-month mentorship & coaching period, and lastly a pitching session. participants are encouraged to apply as a team, fostering teamwork and leadership development from the program's outset.

During the training bootcamp, teams identify and rigorously analyze community problems, then develop innovative solutions to address them. In the mentorship phase, teams work closely with assigned mentors to refine their solutions through research and expert guidance. The pitching session provides a platform for teams to showcase their prototypes to investors and donors, competing for a seed funding grant to kickstart implementation.

**This year** the program engaged 248 youths organized into 62 teams from Nakivale Refugee Settlement. All groups successfully completed the program stages, with 47 teams selected to receive seed funding. Currently, 20

businesses initiated through the program continue to operate successfully, demonstrating tangible impact within the community.



Meet the Brilliant team, a group of aspiring young refugees tackling land pollution caused by high rates of plastic waste. They have launched a plastic recycling project, transforming these wastes into eco-bricks.

248	62	47
youth trained	teams	Teams received seed funding



Participants practicing hairdressing skills.

## Enhancing Refugee Livelihoods through Vocational Training

**Equip Refugees with practical vocational skills that enhance their employability.**

UMOJA addresses the urgent challenge of unemployment among refugees in Nakivale Settlement exacerbated by a lack of vocational skills. In 2020, we launched a transformative vocational training program to empower refugees with practical skills essential for sustainable livelihoods. This initiative aims to not only alleviate immediate job market challenges but also foster long-term economic independence within the community.

### Our vocational training program

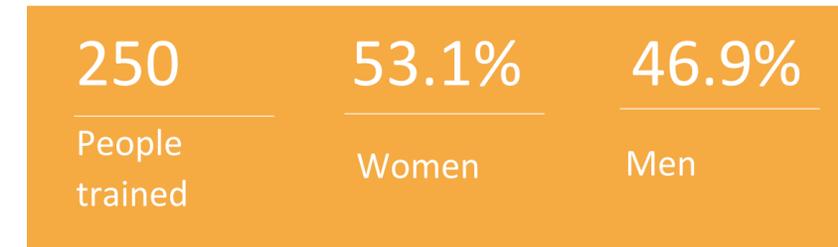
focuses on Carpentry , Hairdressing , Makeup , and Tailoring . This program provides intensive training that equips participants with advanced-level skills, preparing them for employment opportunities or entrepreneurship ventures upon completion. Participants receive certificates upon successfully finishing their training, enhancing their credibility and employability in the local job market.

Since its inception, our program has enabled many graduates to secure employment or start their own businesses, contributing to economic growth within Nakivale Refugee Settlement.

**This year** a total of 250 individuals enrolled in our vocational training program: 73 in Carpentry, 78 in Hairdressing, 42 in Makeup, and 57 in Tailoring. The participant breakdown reflects a balanced gender representation, with 53.1% women and 46.9% men benefiting from our vocational training initiatives.

UMOJA remains committed to expanding our vocational training initiatives to reach a broader audience of refugees in need. By scaling our program and enhancing outreach efforts, we aim to empower more individuals with the skills and opportunities necessary for sustainable

livelihoods and economic resilience.



Francoise with her team.

Meet Francoise and her team, who participated in the vocational training program where they acquired skills in tailoring and soap making, they have opened a tailoring workshop and a liquid soap business.

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***The skills acquired have helped me start a business now I can support my family.***



Timothy and Eric excited after receiving their work passes.

## Facilitating Refugees' Integration into Uganda's Workforce

**Empowering Refugees with the legal documentation required to access employment opportunities.**

Recognizing the challenges refugees face in obtaining legal status and work permits, our initiative aims to facilitate their seamless integration into Uganda's workforce. This promotes economic self-sufficiency and resilience within refugee communities.

In collaboration with the Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE) and Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT), we launched this initiative in 2021. The goal is to assess refugee competencies and provide essential documentation to qualified individuals, enabling them to legally work in their respective fields.

During the inaugural year, we issued 62 work permits to refugees skilled in various domains such as Tailoring, Plumbing, Welding, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Carpentry, and Construction.

**This year** we assessed 156 individuals, resulting in 80 refugees receiving work permits. These individuals demonstrated qualifications in Cooking (Chef), Welding, Driving, Roofing and Ceiling Building, Mechanics, Tailoring, and Carpentry.



Refugees rejoicing with their new work passes in hand.



Kumpala.

Meet Kumpala, a refugee from DR Congo who fled his home country in 2014 after earning a diploma in Electrical Engineering. In Uganda, Kumpala encountered difficulties in securing employment due to a lack of documentation proving his qualifications as an electrician. However, with determination and the support of a work pass facilitated by our program, Kumpala has succeeded in securing a position at UMEME, a prominent national electricity distribution company. His journey underscores resilience and the transformative impact of providing opportunities for refugees to integrate into the workforce.

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***Now that I have a job, I can send my children to school and provide three meals a day for my family.***



Captured moment of joy and connection following a counseling session in Rubondo zone, Nakivale Refugee Settlement.

## Supporting Refugee Mental Well-being

**Healing trauma, stress and depression through counseling and recreation activities.**

Since its inception in 2019, our program has been dedicated to addressing critical mental health challenges among refugees in Nakivale Settlement. Focused on healing trauma, stress, and depression, we provide comprehensive counseling and engaging recreational activities. We recognize the profound impact of displacement and adversity on mental health and aim to bolster resilience

while enhancing the overall wellbeing of refugees.

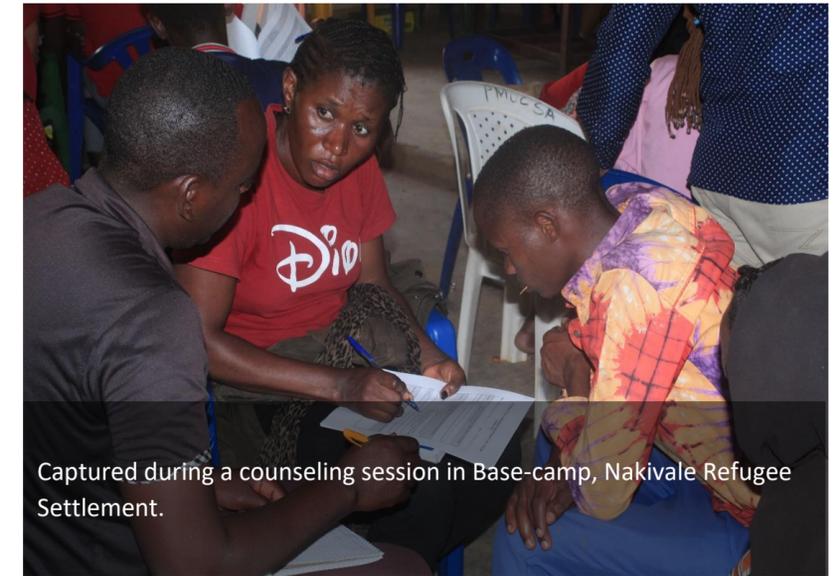
With qualified psychiatrists, we offer compassionate support and a listening ear to those in need. To date, our program has positively impacted thousands of lives, conducting over 3000 counseling sessions.

**This year** alone, over 1000 individuals benefited from our counseling services, receiving crucial support in managing their mental health amidst challenging circumstances.

In the context of refugee response, mental stability is a fundamental human need. We believe that by addressing mental health concerns, refugees can better achieve self-reliance and contribute positively to their communities.

Looking forward, we aim to expand our services by introducing additional activities such as peer support groups. These initiatives will further enrich our holistic approach to supporting refugee mental wellbeing and foster a stronger sense of community resilience.

Our commitment remains steadfast in providing essential mental health support to refugees, ensuring they receive the care and resources needed to thrive amidst adversity.



Captured during a counseling session in Base-camp, Nakivale Refugee Settlement.



***Displacement profoundly affects refugees' mental well-being, with the feeling of not being home exacerbating these challenges. Many refugees turn to drug addiction as a coping mechanism, resulting in hundreds of deaths annually in Nakivale due to drug-related issues.***



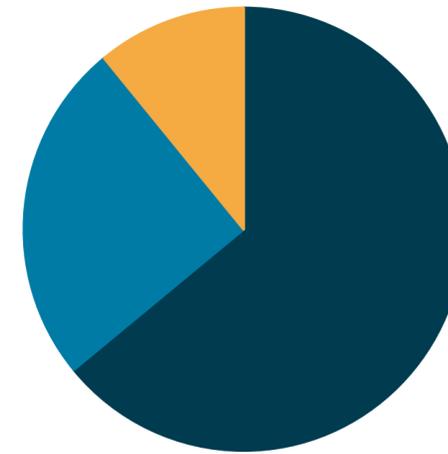
# FINANCIALS

TOTAL REVENUE  
**\$57,000**

Fundraising Events 19.2%

Grants 26.3%

Donations 54.3%



TOTAL EXPENSES  
**\$54,000**

Program Expenses 68.6%

Administration Expenses 20.3%

Fundraising and other Expenses 11.1%





**UMOJA for Peace and Resilience**

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