Resilient & Vibrant
2020 ANNUAL REPORT
OUR MISSION
To build a vibrant movement of girls and young women through transformative leadership, sexual and reproductive health education, and skills development.

VISION
A gender equal world where girls thrive and lead.

CORE VALUES

- **Accountability**
  being accountable for our actions & decisions to stakeholders

- **Collaboration**
  working together by listening & trusting each other

- **Inclusiveness**
  recognizing & respecting diversity in all forms
Dear Friends,

2020 was a historical year with the COVID-19 pandemic, protesting for the end of racial injustices globally, and the continuing challenges related to accelerated climate change. The global pandemic clearly showed us our interconnectedness— that what happens in one country affects another country. It was no longer possible to ignore global and domestic inequalities and disparities.

At the same time, the importance of local solutions to global problems has never been more urgent. We are so proud that Girl Up Initiative Uganda, as a local grassroots organization, was able to build on its strong community relationships and partnerships to respond quickly to the pandemic and its subsequent effects on the economy, health, and education of our girls, young women, and youth. **Overnight, we adopted a humanitarian approach— our communities were struggling with rising poverty, hunger, and stress and looking to us for solutions, help, and support.**

As you will read in this report, our team stepped up to the challenge with their innovative programming ideas, gender-focused approaches, and commitment to best serving vulnerable communities. Self-care and group support was critical so that we could remain resilient and vibrant as an inspiration for others to also connect to their resilience and vibrancy.

We are also so excited that despite these overwhelming challenges, we realized one of our organizational dreams – to write, produce, and share our first music video “Osobola” (You Can), visually sharing the power and strength of adolescent girls in honor of the International Day of the Girl Child. If you haven’t checked it out on our YouTube channel, please do so and feel the inspiration.

Over this past year, we have been overwhelmed by the outpour of support from all of our supporters around the globe. We could not have rolled out our innovative and quick COVID-19 Response without you. It gave us the hope and encouragement to keep going.

As the pandemic continues on, the global crisis will continue to create long-term negative effects in our communities. Nevertheless, we remain optimistic, positive, and grateful for all the small joys in our life and our purpose to serve.

Thank you for standing with us through the good, as well as the challenging. We are in this together!

Monica Nyiraguhabwa  
Co-Founder and  
Executive Director

Kimberly Wolf  
Co-Founder and  
Deputy Executive Director
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HOLISTIC & SUSTAINABLE

1. Comprehensive trainings
   Mentorship & counseling
   Leadership trainings & camps

2. SRH service provision
   Peer-to-peer learning
   Educational campaigns

3. Vocational skills training
   Business mentoring
   Employment opportunities

4. Male engagement
   Gender-based violence prevention
   Media & music campaigns

STRATEGIES

01. Strengthen leadership and confidence

02. Invest in sexual & reproductive health services and education

03. Build economic independence

04. Transform unequal gender norms

Our strategies:

3. Good health and well-being
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
8. Decent work and economic growth
OUR IMPACT

TO DATE

7,796
ADOLESCENT GIRLS PROGRAM

116,378
NI-YETU YOUTH PROGRAM

450
BIG SISTER NETWORK

270
MAZURI DESIGNS HUB

936
BOY CHAMPION PROGRAM

793
PARTNER CAPACITY-BUILDING

138,300
LIVES IMPACTED

2020 IMPACT

11,677
REACHED THROUGH COVID RESPONSE

67
GIRLS RECEIVED SCHOLARSHIPS

35
YOUNG WOMEN TRAINED IN SEWING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

410
YOUTH ACCESSING SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES

2,500
FAMILIES RECEIVED COVID-19 FOOD RELIEF PACKAGES
In acknowledgement of our comprehensive COVID-19 response work, we were featured in a CNN op-ed written by Michelle Obama, founder of the Girls Opportunity Alliance, and Melinda Gates.

Our Executive Director, Monica Nyiraguhabwa, presented at the virtual 2020 African Women and Girls Summit (WAGS). She discussed the importance of gender-inclusive and quality education for girls and young women throughout the continent, especially in light of COVID-19.

On March 22nd, Uganda’s health officials confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in Uganda. Despite Uganda’s experience fighting the Ebola virus, COVID-19 immediately presented a unique set of challenges – loss of family income, poor health, rising food prices, and increased cases of violence in homes – especially for the vulnerable communities and young girls we serve. On March 31st, the Ugandan government announced a nationwide lockdown including; closing international borders, instituting a dusk-to-dawn curfew, and shutting down all schools and non-essential businesses.

Through the many difficulties and uncertainties of 2020, we remained dedicated to reimagining our work in a rapidly changing environment. We learned how to lead and implement programming that responded to the rising levels of violence, inequitable access to reliable information, and increasing need for psychosocial support.

“It’s been more than rewarding. Doing community work during such a time of vulnerability and need has reconnected me back to the purpose of why I do what I do and that is to serve the most vulnerable.”

Monica Nyiragubabwa
Executive Director
Through the COVID-19 Survive & Thrive Fund, GUIU supported families in our communities with basic necessities. Our team purchased supplies and put together family relief packages. These packages consisted of: posho (ground corn), beans, soap, salt, and sanitary pads. Together with local authorities, our team safely distributed these packages for families of the girls in our programs, patron teachers, Ni-Yetu community structures, and other community members at-risk of hunger.

2,500 PACKAGES DISTRIBUTED
EMERGENCY & PSYCHOSOCIAL RESPONSE

With the onset on the pandemic and the resulting increase in violence, GUIU expanded our Emergency Fund. We were able to monitor each case in a more systemic way through the creation and use of a new case tracking system—even going beyond cases of gender-based violence to assist girls and young women with the effects of and needs arising due to unintended pregnancies.

Each survivor received assistance tailored to their unique needs in coordination with local police, healthcare professionals, and other relevant authorities and services.

Throughout 2020, we offered a range of services for survivors of violence, including financial support, psychosocial help, medical assistance, and food relief. We also continued to offer psychosocial support and counseling to different individuals in our communities through regular check-ins via mobile phone. This helped us to know how families were coping, while encouraging them to stay strong and safe.

194 INDIVIDUALS

OVER 250 FAMILIES
Our newest program, the Bringing Voices Together (BVT) Project, was an innovative approach to adequately respond to the specific issues and needs that adolescents faced as a result of COVID-19 and lockdown measures. This project aims to create safe spaces with much-needed learning interventions on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and gender-based violence (GBV) prevention to contribute to a healthy and proactive community of adolescents.

This idea was birthed from the feedback we received from parents through the psychosocial support calls during which the majority of the parents expressed their deep concerns about their children being idle at home and in the communities. Since COVID-19 hit Uganda, many adolescents have been unable to attend school and access other educational materials— as a result, they are more vulnerable to negative peer pressure, unintended pregnancies, drug and alcohol abuse, GBV, and many other negative behaviors and practices.

In August 2020, we launched the BVT which is uniquely implemented through community-based, small dialogue circles covering key concerns for adolescent girls and boys, ages 9 to 16 years in the local suburbs of Kampala.

Through this project, adolescents have access to learning opportunities and a safe space where they can interact freely with their peers and with the different GUIU coaches. The sessions cover topics like communication skills, confidence boosting exercises, avoiding bad peer groups, human rights, gender-based violence, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. We split the groups into single-sex groups to allow for the creation of a safe spaces for free sharing and discussions.

“I learnt that GBV affects both girls and boys and that we all have a right to report those who are violent to courts of law. [BVT] has given me the opportunity to help those who have been mistreated so that we stop violence.”

Kevin, 12-years-old
BVT Participant

1,280 YOUTH REACHED
Before I joined the Bringing Voices Together Project, I was a shy person and feared to interact with people and I would get angry easily. I remember in my vacation, there were silly mistakes I made, there was this boy who said he loved me and I told him let’s be friends. His friends started calling me “sister-in-law” because the boy changed my words and said I accepted him as my boyfriend. I got into the relationship because I feared to tell the boy ‘no’ and I knew he would get angry. Still in my vacation, there were four girls I used to admire. At night, they would put on short clothes. I wanted to be their friend because I thought they were putting on trending clothes, yet at home I usually put on long skirts and dresses. So, I copied and I started putting on short clothes thinking it was good. Remember, our community is filled with drunkards who may never understand that you are a young girl. Additionally, in one of the sessions about body changes, my neighbour saw my age (13 years) on the attendance list and then she said that I look like an older person. When the coach also asked us about menstruation, I said I had not yet started and everyone looked at me and said that I looked to be healthy but that my hormones are slow. That statement hurt me. I went home and I also asked my mum and she said she also started experiencing her menstruation late, too. Most people judge us because of the way we look. I have my older sister, she is 16 years and she has smaller breasts than me, so when I would be dressing up in her presence, I used to fear and I thought I was not normal.

“When I got involved in this project, I got to learn that our bodies are unique and so, we have to love and appreciate them. That’s how I got to appreciate my body. Now I freely dress up with my sister, she even says ‘you no longer fear me’ and I say ‘no!’”

Alinda Vanessa Elizabeth
BVT Participant
Radio is a widely-used and effective form of communication throughout Uganda. During weekly, youth-friendly talkshows our coaches and youth advocates discussed different topics such as life skills, GBV, COVID-19 prevention, menstrual hygiene, puberty, and more.

“Parents should get comfortable speaking about sexual and reproductive health and rights with their children so that they can make informed decisions.”
- Aemo Winter, Champion of Change

GUIU held community health drives throughout Kampala. During these health drives, our team drove through communities in the organization van, spreading health messages via loudspeaker and distributing critical information materials on sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence prevention, and COVID-19.

“This is a key element to bringing about change. People are hungry for information in any way... We even had one parent reach out to us after the Community Health Drive with the hope that we could counsel her daughter.”
- Clare Tusingwire, Director of Programs
Prior to COVID-19, we had begun a new year of implementation of our core, in-school programs. Our flagship program, the Adolescent Girls Program (AGP) – which aims to increase the agency of young girls to make informed and healthy choices and be confident, thriving leaders – expanded into 20 partner schools. AGP and the complementary Boy Champion Program (BCP) – expanded into 7 schools in 2020 – work in synergy to contribute to systematic, gendered change within schools and communities through gender-transformative education, skills-building, and mentorship. We believe this holistic approach supports young girls to develop their self-confidence, and young boys to form positive masculine identities so that both can be agents of positive change.

Our Big Sisters Network, a mentorship-focused program, ensures that our AGP alumni continue to access girl-friendly education and stay engaged after they have graduated from the one-year AGP training program. We were unable to begin implementation due to COVID-19, but stayed connected with them through psychosocial support calls.

1,129 Girls enrolled in AGP
460 Boys enrolled in BCP
20 Partner schools
The Ni-Yetu Youth Program targets young people, ages 13 to 24 years, living in the urban slum communities of Kampala to prevent gender-based violence, improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes, and promote gender equality. This program is designed by young people, for young people. Through the use of peer educators, street theatre performances, and community-based health camps, young people are able to easily access resources and knowledge in a youth-friendly manner.

In accordance with public health protocols during COVID-19, we had to reduce the amount of community gatherings while still providing hard-to-reach community members with life-saving health services and information. Through the use of community health services camps, strengthened partnerships with health centers, and radio campaigns we were able to continue serving despite the challenges present during the pandemic. In addition, we worked closely with various stakeholders to build their capacities surrounding case management, gender-sensitive practices, and proper referral pathways to best support survivors of violence.

**COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES**

Innovative way to bring health services— including STI testing, family planning methods, cancer screenings, malaria treatment— to hard-to-reach communities unable to access health centers.

**RADIO CAMPAIGNS**

We adapted our drama performances to radio drama shows— through age-relevant storytelling we teach lessons such as violence prevention, family planning, and preventing teenage pregnancy. Listeners interact with us via phone calls to ask questions and give feedback.

**COMMUNITY DIALOGUES**

Our Champions of Change (CoC) held small, peer-led community dialogue circles to share knowledge and discuss inequalities, power dynamics, and cultural norms affecting women and girls and hindering their full participation in society.

**STAKEHOLDER CAPACITY BUILDING**

With the increase in violence resulting from COVID-19, we prioritized strengthening our relationships with local police, child protection units, and the judiciary to streamline referral pathways, promote gender-sensitive case management, and center survivors.
Before joining the Ni-Yetu Youth Program, I was a lonely girl without friends, who used to fear interacting with people because I felt like I had no confidence to do so. In 2018, my friend, a Ni-Yetu peer educator, came home and told me that he needed some help from me. On reaching the venue, I found a group of youths gathered. I told him that I don’t like gatherings. But he insisted and told me to stay and first understand what was going to happen. It happened that on that very day, the topic discussed was gender-based violence (GBV). During the session, the facilitator asked for examples of violence and one of the participants mentioned rape, which left the boys around me laughing. I was so inspired by this topic and developed the desire to participate in the program because I had witnessed GBV happening in my community.

For the next session, when he picked me from home, I never hesitated because the topic for that day was family planning and contraceptives. This was more interesting because I had an experience with three of my friends who got pregnant. For every session I attended, I always learnt something new and came out with a different feeling.

At the start of Ni-Yetu Phase II, my friend asked if I would be interested in becoming a peer educator and I gladly accepted. With time, a coach from Girl Up Initiative Uganda called me for a training. I went for the training, and managed to make friends because I could freely interact with people and confidently speak!

“...The more I interacted with people, the more I became a better person as compared to how I was in the beginning. Eventually, I started my journey of being a peer educator and with this experience, I managed to inspire a young girl who asked me if I had always been confident while communicating...I am glad that my story was able to change someone’s life, and I am grateful for the Ni-Yetu Youth Program because I am now a changed person.”

Florence Atim, Peer Educator
Our Mazuri Designs Hub is a year-long training program designed to equip vulnerable, out-of-school young women, ages 16-35, with comprehensive life and vocational skills. In 2020, 35 young women learned how to produce clothing and accessories, including face masks; developed their style; and discovered how to market and sell their creations. They had access to our Mazuri Designs workshop where they gained hands-on skills and knowledge in client relations, customer service, and store management. In addition to learning practical sewing and tailoring skills, sessions on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and social skills were also held for the young women.

The cohort of young women are now more fully equipped with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence to find gainful employment or start up their own businesses, as a result of learning both vocational and personal life skills!
When I came, I did not have so many ideas about the machine. But right now, I can measure a person, I can make clothes of different designs. I did not only get skills about tailoring, but they also taught us things like communication skills. When you get a customer, how you should talk to them: you should be confident, you should be sure of what you're doing so the customer does not doubt you!

Karungi Assumpta
Mazuri Designs Hub Graduate
2020 FINANCIALS

Below you will find our combined 2020 financial results for our Girl Up Initiative Uganda operations in both the US and Uganda. This year, we are grateful to our partners who increased their financial support for our work to best respond to the negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic among our communities. Thanks to our generous partners, our revenue increased by 47% from 2019. We continue to keep our US overhead and fundraising expenses low by running our operations from our headquarters in Uganda, thus, ensuring that the majority of our funds reach our program participants, while also supporting the employment of local young Ugandans.

### REVENUE 2020

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<td>Individuals</td>
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### EXPENSES 2020

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<td>Change in Net Assets</td>
<td>$161,594</td>
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"Girl Up Initiative Uganda is a truly unique organization, which is leading the way on gender innovative education in Uganda. The programs run by GUIU are unique and are executed with the care and efficiency you only see from teams that really care. My time with GUIU has shown me what can be achieved when amazing young women and allied men work with love and respect for themselves and their communities!"

— Nastassja White
A resounding thank you to all of our partners. Every dollar of your support is truly making a difference, especially in the face of COVID-19. Thank you for believing in us, and in the power of girls and young women.