



Gulu, Uganda

Project Shelter Wakadogo

**Rising from the ashes of civil war to
become a beacon for the
community**



**WORLD'S
BEST SCHOOL**
Overcoming
Adversity



TEMPLETON WORLD
CHARITY FOUNDATION



**WORLD'S
BEST SCHOOL
PRIZES**

Table of Contents

- 02 — Introduction**
- 03 — Profile**
- 04 — Context and Challenge**
- 07 — Expertise and Approach**
- 11 — Outcomes and Results**
- 12 — Key Steps**
- 15 — Advice and Guidance**



Introduction

Project Shelter Wakadogo in Gulu, Uganda, has flourished from a school with only two classrooms founded in the wake of war to now educating over 477 girls and boys with one of the highest student retention rates in the country. Its commitment to providing free school meals, healthcare and quality education for the surrounding community has seen the school become a second home for many. Its response during Uganda's long lockdown has proved effective in keeping underserved and low-income students learning despite their lack of access to the tools to learn remotely.



Profile:



Country:
Uganda



Region:
Gulu



School type:
NGO school



Location area:
Rural



Student population:
301 to 500



Prize Category:
Overcoming Adversity

“It is a great honour to be recognised for the work we have done these past 17 years since the war ended in northern Uganda. Our greatest desire is to see more children receive quality education and this is exactly what this prize will allow us to do.”

– Charles Odong Kigundi,
Headteacher of Project
Shelter Wakadogo



In-depth look

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE

Project Shelter Wakadogo is a pre-primary and primary not-for-profit school located in Gulu District in Uganda, and is a registered charity in the UK, Canada and Uganda. The school provides quality education to over 477 girls and boys from post-conflict northern Uganda.

The name 'Wakadogo' translates to 'for the little ones' in Swahili. The charity was founded in 2005 when northern Uganda was emerging from 23 years of civil war. During the war, 40,000 children were abducted to serve as child soldiers or, in the case of girls, "wives" to other soldiers. 1.7 million people were displaced and over 100,000 people were abducted or mutilated by the Lord's Resistance Army.

Wakadogo School, the first school in Acoyo village, opened its doors in 2009 to educate some of the most marginalised children. Uganda's long lockdown during the COVID pandemic was the latest in a long line of challenges the school has had to contend with. Project Shelter Wakadogo quickly determined that online schooling would not be feasible for its students who lacked access to the necessary technology. Only 2% of the population have access to personal computers and less than 9% of the rural population have access to the internet. To address the discrepancies, Project Shelter Wakadogo pivoted to conducting 36,000 home-schooling lessons.





“We were just university students when we co-founded Wakadogo 17 years ago. We did not have a lot of experience but we knew that if we listened and responded to the needs of the community, we wouldn’t go too far wrong. Today, that same community is ensuring that Wakadogo continues to provide quality education to 477 girls and boys.”

**- Farah Williamson, Co-founder and Trustee of
Project Shelter Wakadogo**



EXPERTISE AND APPROACH

The school often adapts itself to meet upcoming challenges brought about by unforeseen events. During the pandemic, homeschooling was implemented to support students who were unable to conduct their studies online. The door-to-door learning strategy initiated by Wakadogo staff kept students on track with learning: “We mobilised to go door-to-door and provide face-to-face teaching to small groups of children in their compounds or homesteads, to bring school to the students. This was completely unprecedented when we started this work,” Farah Williamson, Co-founder and Trustee of Project Shelter Wakadogo states.

Due to the prevalence of poverty in the community, the school provides a daily free nutritious meal during school hours, administers basic medical care for common illnesses such as malaria, and initiates sports and music programmes that encourage students to remain in school and prevent dropouts.





The student leadership, represented by the school's head boy and head girl, regularly involve learners in the day-to-day running of the school. They organise girls' and boys' meetings every month with support from senior teachers in order to stem the rate of school dropouts.

The youth leadership also helps support students who have learning difficulties in their own home, promotes a violence-free home for students, and encourages peer-to-peer learning to help improve academic performance.

Constant engagement with the local community has proved pivotal. The school staff and stakeholders realised that getting students involved in outreach to other children out of school boosted enrolment. Students walk through villages, trading centres and other hubs outside the school in order to persuade those in the wider community to enrol their children to the school. They also speak directly to parents and caregivers and appeal to them directly. Students are also critical in identifying areas within the community where out-of-school children can be found, like areas where child labour is commonplace.





“Against all odds, children fought to go to school during the war, and post-conflict, the community prioritised education because of the vital role it plays in helping to heal and rebuild. Every day is filled with many challenges as the community continues to overcome adversity. I am amazed by Charles and the team’s ability to transform obstacles into opportunities for growth and change.”

**- Andrea Charbonneau, Co-founder and
Trustee of Wakadogo**



OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

The school has provided over 36,192 home-schooling lessons to students face-to-face. It has retained a 100% Primary Leaving Exam pass rate in the district and has one of the highest student retention rates in the country. It also has a 100% transition rate to secondary school.

The school has received a number of awards and certificates of merit for excellent performance in music, dance, drama and sports competitions from the District Education Office.

Wakadogo's Parent Teachers' Association fosters strong relationships between the school, the staff, the parents and the local community. The PTA helps to keep the entire school community informed of current events, issues, and accomplishments through regular meetings to share information with members. Involving parents provides room for families to

understand the challenges faced by the school and encourages their participation to become part of the solution. It was through developing a closer relationship with parents that the school began to notice that student achievement improved, and the institution began to develop a positive reputation in the community.

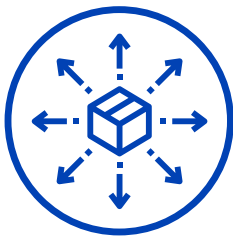


Key Steps



FACE-TO-FACE LEARNING OUTREACH PLAN

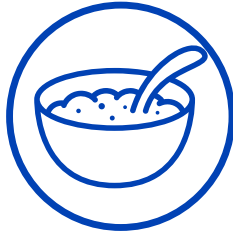
The school quickly pivoted in the wake of the pandemic and, provided home-schooling, with in-person outside lessons provided to small groups of students to ensure they could continue their studies. In total, the faculty reached 1,129 students both from Wakadogo and the wider community.



DISTRIBUTING SCHOOL MATERIALS

Home learning kits were sent to 455 children to ensure they could study at home during the pandemic. These home learning kits included pens, pencils, crayons, exercise books, counter books and mathematical sets. Due to the digital illiteracy and technology deficit in Uganda, it was critical for Wakadogo to pivot and reach students in other ways.





PROVIDING TAKE-HOME RATIONS

Food packages were provided to students and their families during the peak of the pandemic lockdown when movement was most restricted and livelihoods were lost. These food packages were a lifeline for students at Wakadogo.



NURTURING STUDENT-PARENT RELATIONSHIPS

Teachers provided guidance, counselling to the learners and educated parents on how to support children with home-learning and how to keep their children safe during the pandemic and after when lessons returned back inside the classroom.





Standard Chartered

2 Write 0.18 in words.
= 0.18
= eighteen hundredths

3 Write 24.35 in words.
24 and 35/100
= twenty four and hundredths

4 Write 6.212 in words.

5 Write 0.8 in words.

6 Write 49.7 in words.

Writing decimals word in figures

Example
1. Write "eight and twenty three hundredths" in figures.
8 and $\frac{23}{100}$
 $= 8.23$

2 Write "two hundred forty eight thousandths" in words.



Advice and Guidance

A child-centric approach is essential. Enquiry into what students need and how they want to be instructed helps the school to act as a facilitator for their needs. Having a solution-focused attitude acts as the foundation for overcoming instances of adversity that a school might face in its lifetime. “There’s nothing to say that you can’t learn under a mango tree,” Kigundi said. “We will find a way no matter what happens, and you don’t always have to have the perfect environment to make it happen.” It is important to involve students in the decision-making process as you’ll never know what is best for them unless you ask. This is also true for parents as well as they are a major factor in supporting children in their education.”

Every opportunity to empower a child is taken, always recognising the barrier that girls face in education. Therefore the school creates a space so that girls can develop a strong voice and so that also female teachers can have an equal chance to be role models. The school strives for innovation in its teaching methods and believes that these have been instrumental in its success. For example, positive teaching methods have helped to build confidence in students in an empowering learning environment while discouraging violence against children. Also, they introduced a phonics programme that makes learning to read fun and which uses a variety of teaching methods that makes it more accessible to all student learning styles.



Finally, and most recently, teachers are introducing technology into the classroom so that students can also benefit from interactive programmes that are helping them to become computer literate and will help them in the workforce.

More information

 <https://wakadogo.org/>

 [@Wakadogo](#)

 [Wakadogo](#)

 [@wakadogoschool](#)

Download [Wakadogo's Annual Review 2020](#)

Watch this [school's video](#)

