

THE WHAT, WHY AND HOW: Paco Roco Gulu project:

Rebuilding resilience and psychological recovery in Northern Uganda.

MBS for Mental Health and Wellbeing for Global Majority UK is a mental health charity founded by diaspora doctors and nurses from Uganda who are living in the UK. The charity is supported by the Uganda Nurses and Association UK, The British Ugandan doctors, UK Allied professionals, and the Uganda Embassy.

We would like to introduce our mental health fundraising plan for comprehensive mental health and wellbeing in Gulu, which will take place from November 3rd, 2024 to November 13th. The plan involves diaspora nurses, doctors, and allied professionals working with local teams in Gulu to implement evidence-based pathways for prevention and health promotion in Northern Uganda. Additionally, the plan includes an extended program to support youth vocational activities and encourage the development of skills in various fields.

Our diaspora organization is privileged to participate in the rebuilding of communities as a way to give back. This effort, known as Roco Paco to the Lwo people, aims to provide mental health awareness and mental health first aid training to improve mental health and wellbeing in the region.

In order to support the healing and recovery of individuals and communities affected by the legacy of conflict in Northern Uganda, it is crucial to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and promote mental well-being. MBS for Mental Health will address the mental health needs of the population in Gulu through a comprehensive approach that prioritizes training, trauma-informed care, community-based interventions, psychosocial support, and increased access to mental health services.

Gulu and the surrounding areas have been significantly impacted by the long-lasting effects of a civil war that ravaged the Acholi sub-region for over 20 years. This prolonged conflict, characterized by violence, displacement, and trauma, has had a profound impact on the mental health of the population in Gulu. Consequently, Gulu has one of the highest rates of mental illness in Uganda, with many individuals experiencing various mental health challenges as a direct result of the conflict.

The civil war in Northern Uganda caused widespread devastation, loss of life, and displacement of communities. The conflict was marked by atrocities such as abductions, killings, sexual violence, and forced conscription of children as soldiers. These traumatic experiences have left deep scars on the mental well-being of individuals in Gulu, leading to high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and other mental health conditions.

There are several current areas of concern that need to be addressed:

1. **Trauma and PTSD:** Many individuals in Gulu have experienced severe trauma and witnessed horrific events during the conflict, resulting in a high prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and related mental health issues.

2. **Displacement and Loss:** The forced displacement of communities, loss of homes, livelihoods, and loved ones have contributed to feelings of grief, loss, and psychological distress among the population in Gulu.

3. **Stigma and Social Isolation:** The stigma surrounding mental illness, coupled with social ostracization and discrimination, can prevent individuals in Gulu from seeking help and accessing mental health services, worsening their condition.

4. **Lack of Mental Health Services:** Limited access to mental health services, trained professionals, and resources in Gulu can hinder individuals from receiving timely and appropriate care for their mental health needs.

5. **Intergenerational Trauma:** The impact of the civil war on families and communities in Gulu has resulted in intergenerational trauma, where the effects of trauma and mental illness are passed down from one generation to the next.

Addressing the mental health needs of the population in Gulu requires comprehensive approaches that prioritize trauma-informed care, community-based interventions, psychosocial support, and increased access to mental health services. Efforts to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and promote mental well-being are essential.