

**CEMELIA  
INITIATIVES  
AFRICA**



Potential Meets  
Opportunity

# **CEMELIA INITIATIVES AFRICA ANNUAL REPORT**

**2024**

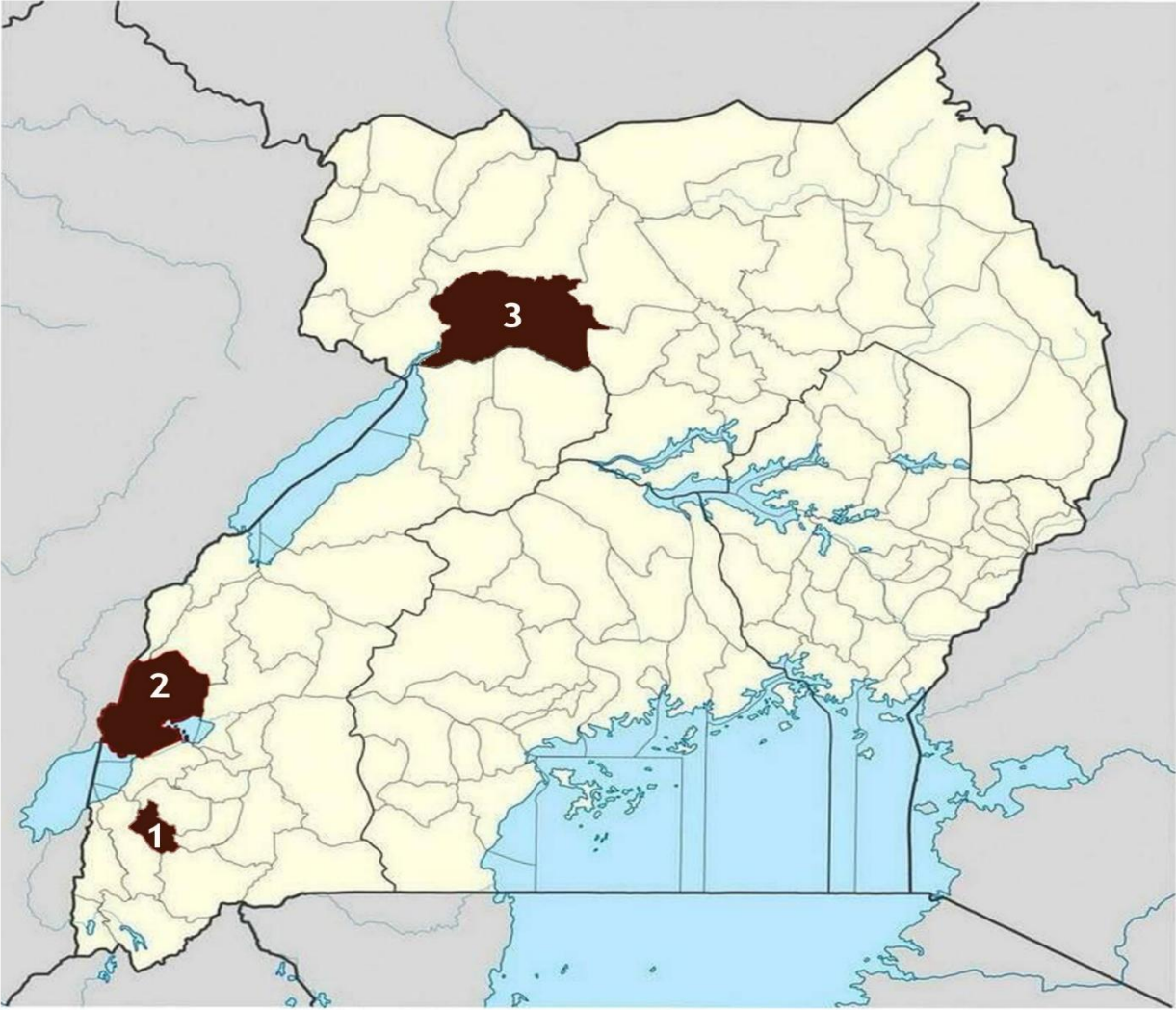
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## List of Acronyms

CBO	Community-Based Organization
GUSFAB	Gulu Sprinters Rugby Football Club
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
ToT	Trainer of Trainers
UCE	Uganda Certificate of Education

**CEMELIA INITIATIVES AFRICA GEOGRAPHIC AREAS OF OPERATION**



**KEY**



- 1. Mitooma District ( South Western Region)
- 2. Kasese District ( South Western Region)
- 3. Gulu District ( Northern Region)

## 1. Executive Summary

Cemelia Initiatives Africa is a registered, community-driven non-governmental organization based in Uganda, established in January 2024. With a mission to provide sustainable social services and build the capacity of vulnerable populations, the organization focuses on empowering women, youth, and children through targeted interventions in skills development, climate change mitigation, education, agriculture, health, and wellness. Operating in the districts of Mitooma, Kasese, and Gulu, Cemelia Initiatives Africa delivers grassroots programs that transform local challenges into opportunities reaching over 11,000 beneficiaries in its first year of operation.

Key achievements during the reporting period included skills training for women and youth, particularly in transforming banana pseudo stems into biodegradable crafts; the promotion of waste-to-wealth innovations; education support to enhance literacy and numeracy; and the integration of mental health awareness through sports-based activities. In Mitooma District, a physical office was established to strengthen the organization's presence and enhance service delivery. Education scholarships were awarded to vulnerable primary school children, while seniors received essential health and wellness services. In addition, Project BanaCloth was launched in partnership with IGNULAK and TEXFAD to train women and youth in producing eco-friendly crafts and textiles from waste banana pseudostems, with the aim of generating income and improving livelihoods.

In Kasese District, the organization partnered with Mothercare Preparatory School to implement initiatives focused on climate change awareness, mitigation, and adaptation. In Gulu District, support was extended to secondary school students through education scholarships, alongside mental health counselling sessions addressing drug and substance abuse. These were conducted in partnership with the Gulu Sprinters Rugby Football Club, further advancing the organization's impact in youth wellness and behaviour change.

Despite notable accomplishments, several challenges were encountered. These included a limited market for eco-friendly products particularly those made from waste banana pseudo stems, insufficient funding to scale up economic empowerment and scholarship programs, and unreliable electricity supply, which disrupted fibre extraction and led to increased operational costs due to dependence on generators. In response, the organization initiated efforts to identify local markets, prepare funding proposals, and explore alternative energy solutions to sustain its activities.

Cemelia Initiatives Africa is guided by a participatory and inclusive approach that emphasizes local ownership, capacity building, and long-term sustainability. By equipping community groups with relevant skills and tools, and promoting the use of affordable, locally available materials, the organization ensures program continuity. All interventions are aligned with local government priorities and are integrated with public services to foster systemic change and enduring impact.

This report presents the progress made between 1st January and 31st December 2024, capturing key achievements, challenges, lessons learned, success stories, and the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that supported implementation and accountability.

## 2. Introduction

Founded in January 2024, Cemelia Initiatives Africa is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to transforming the lives of vulnerable populations: women, seniors, youth, and children through innovative, inclusive, and sustainable development initiatives. Cemelia Initiatives aims to achieve the following objectives: 1) Build the capacity of CBOs in project design, implementation, proposal writing, monitoring and evaluation and link them to funding opportunities. 2) Transform banana pseudo stems into quality, sustainable and biodegradable textiles and eco-friendly crafts; 3) Provide education assistance and improve literacy and numeracy in vulnerable communities; 4) Support climate change mitigation and adaptation in selected schools and communities; 5) Provide social, health and wellness services for seniors; 6) Support sports activities to aid healthy lifestyles and mental health for children and young people.

The year 2024 was a year of establishment, growth, resilience and community engagement. Amidst social economic constraints, climate change challenges and increasing youth unemployment, our team remained steadfast in advancing our goal to provide sustainable social, education, agricultural and income generating initiatives through increasing the capacity of vulnerable people to meet their needs. We deepened our reach across rural villages in Mitooma, Gulu and Kasese and established partnerships to create meaningful, sustainable and measurable change.

Key programs include “Project BanaCloth,” which empowers women and youth with skills to transform banana pseudo stems into eco-friendly products, and the “Golden Years Initiative,” aimed at enhancing the quality of life for vulnerable seniors. In addition, initiatives focused on climate change awareness, mitigation, and adaptation, alongside education support through scholarships, have made a tangible impact. These efforts have provided rural households with income-generating skills, promoted environmental sustainability, and enabled vulnerable children to access and remain in school.

This report outlines our key achievements, challenges and lessons learned as well as stories from the field. It also reflects our commitment to accountability, transparency, and continuous learning as we work towards a more just and resilient future for our communities.

## 3. Implementation Progress

### 3.1 Program Management

The first 5 months, January-May 2025, were focused on start-up activities which included registration of the NGO, office set up, preparing visibility materials, conducting assessments and establishing partnerships.



During the reporting period, Cemelia Initiatives Africa was registered as an NGO and a fully equipped physical office was established in Katenga Subcounty, Mitooma District, serving as the organization's headquarters.

Cemelia Initiatives Headquarters in Mitooma district.

### **Partnerships and Collaboration**

During the reporting period, strategic partnerships were established with the Mitooma District Local Government. Senior government officials actively participated in program oversight and officiated at key community events, enhancing the program's visibility and credibility. As a result of the strong working relationship, the organization has maintained a visible and active presence at key district events. Senior management has represented the organization at major annual observances, including International Women's Day, Youth Day, and Drop Everything and Read Day.

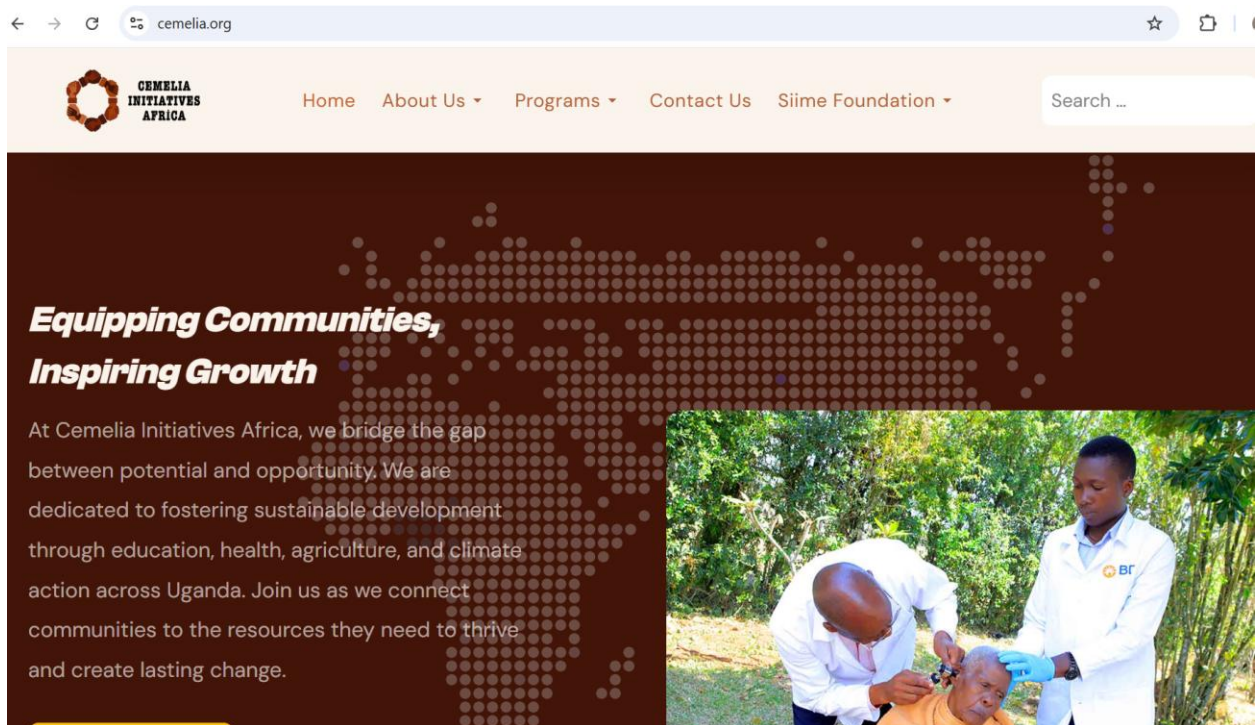
Additional partnerships were formed with the following institutions, each contributing to one or more of the organization's objectives:

Rwagashani Mixed Farm (Western Uganda): Partnering to increase household incomes among rural communities in Mitooma District through sustainable agricultural initiatives. Gulu Sprinters Rugby Football Club (Northern Uganda): A community-based club focused on empowering young females by reducing school dropout rates, preventing teenage pregnancy, and improving mental health through sports engagement. IGNULAK Pour Femme (USA): A creative brand that uses natural materials to produce wearable art, interior décor, and functional design pieces contributing to the organization's skills development and economic empowerment initiatives. Mothercare Preparatory School (Kasese District, Western Uganda): A strategic partnership designed to foster a lifelong love of reading among children while promoting environmental stewardship. This

partnership aligns closely with the organization’s objectives related to climate change mitigation, foundational education, and literacy advancement.

## Communications, Visibility & Reporting

To enhance visibility and community engagement, branded materials such as pull-up banners, leaflets, and teardrop banners were developed and are actively used during program implementation. An organizational website ([www.cemelia.org](http://www.cemelia.org)) was established and is functioning well, serving as a key platform for visibility and engagement. Vibrant and informative updates are regularly posted, highlighting program activities, sharing experiences and providing stakeholders with timely information and resources. The website has also enhanced outreach, improved transparency, and strengthened communication with partners, donors, and the wider community.



Regarding reporting, technical and financial reports were submitted in a timely manner, in accordance with organizational requirements, and donor guidelines. Progress and results are regularly shared with communities through review and planning meetings, accessible platforms such as radio talk shows and visual displays in public spaces, promoting transparency and community engagement. Broader program outcomes are communicated through various channels, including written publications, the organization's website, social media platforms (X and YouTube), ensuring visibility and accountability to all stakeholders.

## Program Design, Planning and Implementation

Programs are based on evidence from community-based needs assessments, stakeholder consultations, and data from local government and development partners. Community members,

especially women and youth, were involved in the design process to ensure relevance and ownership. Detailed activity plans with clear timelines, responsibilities, and budgets were developed and reviewed quarterly.

Cemelia Initiatives Africa implemented its activities through a collaborative approach involving both organizational staff and community volunteers who are based within the target communities. To strengthen its reach and impact, the organization partners with CBOs, schools, health centers, and relevant government departments, leveraging local expertise, networks, and resources. Target groups including vulnerable youth, women, and girls are not only beneficiaries but also active participants in program activities, fostering a sense of ownership and ensuring the relevance of interventions. Capacity building is a core component of the approach, with staff, volunteers, and community members receiving targeted training to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively implement and sustain project activities. A comprehensive fundraising plan was also developed and is currently being implemented to support program sustainability.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning**

A comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan was developed and is actively implemented to track the progress of activities and achievement of program objectives, while enabling timely corrective actions when necessary. Prior to the commencement of program implementation, a needs assessment was carried out alongside a mini baseline survey to inform program design, establish benchmarks, and tailor interventions to the context-specific needs of the target population.

Regular monitoring was conducted for each program component using structured interviews and observation checklists. These tools are aligned with key performance indicators and are used consistently to track progress, identify bottlenecks, and ensure accountability. A mid year review was conducted to assess the program's effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and impact.

In addition, monthly review meetings and reflective learning sessions were held with program teams and stakeholders. These sessions provide a platform to discuss emerging challenges, share lessons learned, and revise strategies as needed to enhance overall program performance.

## **3.2 Progress Towards Objectives**

### **3.2.1 Capacity Building for CBOs**

**Objective 1: Build the capacity of CBOs in project design, implementation, proposal writing, monitoring and evaluation and link them to funding opportunities.**

During the reporting period, Cemelia Initiatives Africa provided both financial and technical support to Siime Foundation Africa – Mitooma Chapter, an affiliated community-based organization (CBO). This support facilitated the implementation of several initiatives, including a Health and Wellness program for senior citizens and the provision of education services. The CBO

was also granted access to shared office space and equipment and is currently hosted at Cemelia Initiatives' headquarters in Mitooma District. In addition, the organization offered technical assistance in proposal development, resulting in the submission of two funding proposals.

### 3.2.2 Skills Development

**Objective 2: Transform banana pseudo stems into quality, sustainable and biodegradable textiles and eco-friendly crafts.**

**Result 1: Sustainable and biodegradable crafts made from quality yarn from banana pseudo stems for income generation**

This objective is implemented under the BanaCloth Project whose goal is to skill women and youths to transform banana pseudo stem into quality, and biodegradable crafts for both the local and international markets. The organization procured a pseudo stem fiber extractor machine, 5 weaving boards (catering for 20 people at ago) and accessories and installed them at a centrally located common user facility (training centre) at Rwagashani Mixed Farm for easy access of the trainees.

During the reporting period, women, and youths were mobilized and introduced to the value addition to the banana crop. Thirty-two participants were trained in banana fibre extraction, using weaving boards to produce eco friendly crafts in November 2024.



*Trainees learn how to use a weaving board*

A closing ceremony which included practical demonstration of mini carpet weaving and showcasing of table and door mats made during the training was officiated by the Mitooma District Resident District Commissioner, accompanied by the Local Government 5 Chairperson and other district officials.



Sample Certificate awarded to the trainees

The 32 trainees were awarded training completion certificates. This function was covered by Voice of Ruhinda and aired to inform a wider audience. Following the training, the trained beneficiaries continued accessing the common user facility, at their convenient time, to advance their skills and make products for sale.

### Key Activities and Outputs/Outcomes

Activity	Key Outputs	Key Outcomes
Identify the ToT and engaging TEXTFAD (a dynamic Ugandan social enterprise and skills-academy transforming banana pseudo-stem waste into sustainable, high-value textiles and handicrafts) to undertake the training.	- One ToT trained in transforming banana pseudo stems into eco friendly products.	-ToT cascaded the training to 32 women and youth who are producing various products for sale.
Acquire and equip the common user facility/training centre.	-Engaged Rwagashani Mixed Farm to provide space for the training centre. -Training centre fully equipped to facilitate production of eco friendly products.	- Common user facility utilised by the trainees to acquire skills and produce various products for sale.
Train women and youths in transforming waste Banana Pseudo stems into biodegradable textiles and crafts.	-32 women and youths gained skills in thread extraction, weaving and mat making.	- Increased self-employment and income among youth and women.

<p>Conduct a radio talk show on program activities including the BanaCloth project.</p>	<p>-Voice of Ruhinda engaged to host a radio program to create awareness of the skilling initiatives.</p>	<p>- More than 8000 people were reached with information. - Increased expression of interest to participate in the training.</p>
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3.2.3 Education support

**Objective 3: Provide education assistance and improve literacy and numeracy in vulnerable communities.**

**Result 3.1: Increased access to primary/ secondary education to selected vulnerable children.**

Cemelia Initiatives Africa implements a merit-based scholarship for vulnerable academic gifted students. The scholarships cover tuition, PTA and/or scholastic materials. In collaboration with Siime Foundation Africa, the organization provided scholarships to 5 children in Rwagashani primary school. In addition, 5 other scholarships were provided to secondary school students in Gulu and Ntungamo districts. The scholarship awardees performed well and progressed to the next level of their education.



*Some of the scholarship awardees displaying their school bags.*

**Result 3.2. Increased literacy and lifelong learning among children and young people**

In collaboration with Siime Foundation Africa, the organization supported implementation of the “library in a box initiative.” A library in a box kit comprises a collection of 80-100 books. Last pages of most of the books include questions, games and other activities and a guide to help engage children with their reading. Books are categorized and rotate after every 4 weeks from one school to another during the school term. The rotational approach gives children opportunity to read a variety of books as each box kit carries different titles. Over 762 children in three partner schools

were reached with this initiative. New schools have expressed interest in joining the program; however, additional funding is required for the organization to expand coverage and meet the growing demand.



*Primary school children displaying books borrowed from the library in a box*

Cemelia Initiatives Africa also implements the “Sit and Read” library initiative which aims to improve literacy skills through providing an environment for reading every Sunday afternoon. This program targets children in Katenga township and the surrounding villages. The initiative reached over 340 children by the end of 2024.



*Some of the children participating in the sit and read program*

## Key Activities and Outputs/Outcomes

Activity	Key Outputs	Key Outcomes
Provide education scholarships to selected primary and secondary school students.	Scholarships were provided to 10 students (5 in Rwagashani primary school in Mitooma district and 5 in secondary schools in Gulu and Ntungamo district).	Increased access to primary and secondary education.
Provide partner primary schools in Mitooma district with reading materials/story books using the “library in a box” approach.	3 Primary schools (Mboneko, Nyakahita and Rwagashani) accessed story books reaching 762 pupils.	Improved reading skills and school engagement to promote reading.
Provide “sit and read” library services to children in Katenga trading centre.	Library services provided to over 340 primary school pupils in Katenga township.	Improved reading skills.

### 3.3 Climate Action and Environment

**Objective 4: Support climate change mitigation and adaptation in selected schools and communities.**

**Result 4.1 Promoting environmental wellness and empowering schools and communities to advocate for sustainable practices and environmental stewardship.**

Cemelia Initiatives Africa supported children from Mothercare Preparatory School in Kasese district to communicate powerful environmental justice messages through drama, speeches and debating competitions. The event was organized by Kasese District and the audience included various stakeholders. Through such activities, the organization aims to inspire collective action for a healthier, greener future.



*Mothercare pupils delivering environmental justice messages through drama and debates*

## Key Activities and Outputs/Outcomes

Activity	Key Outputs	Key Outcomes
Supported Mothercare Preparatory school to participate in climate awareness competitions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provided support to the Environment club to conduct awareness raising sessions on climate change through debates and edutainment.</li> <li>- Supported participation in district environment competitions including drama, debates and speeches.</li> </ul>	Increased climate literacy in communities and schools.

### 3.4. Health and Wellness

#### Objective 5: Provide social, health and wellness services for seniors

##### Result 5.1: Improved cardiovascular health, reduced mental health issues, enhanced social skills, and increased self-esteem.

In partnership with Siime Foundation Africa, a health camp was conducted in July 2024 targeting Seniors. The health camp is one of the key activities under the health and wellness program. The Seniors were mobilized from the seven-program catchment village. Thirty seniors (22 female 8 male) received free health services including testing for blood pressure, blood sugar, eyesight and ear cleanliness. Some of the tested beneficiaries were treated while others were referred to health facilities. The seniors also received education sessions about nutrition, personal hygiene, sanitation, body exercise and rest. Seniors also shared their personal experiences, which fostered peer learning, provided emotional support, and helped address loneliness.



*Health workers providing ear testing services during the health camp*

To enhance hygiene and wellness of seniors, wellness kits were distributed to 32 targeted seniors each quarter. The quarterly seniors' wellness kit consists of a bar of washing soap, a tablet of bathing soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, handkerchief, sugar/honey, salt, vaseline, tea leaves, a pair



of sandals, insecticide treated mosquito net and a 5-liter jerrycan where to keep drinking water. Seniors appreciated the wellness kit given to them and requested if provision of a comb and washing sponge could be considered in the future.

*Staff handing over the Wellness kit to one of the beneficiary seniors.*

### Key Activities and Outputs/Outcomes

Activity	Key Outputs	Key Outcomes
Deliver home-based health, hygiene, and nutritional support to seniors.	-32 seniors supported with hygiene kits.	- Improved nutrition and hygiene amongst targeted seniors.
Conduct home visits to reduce loneliness.	- One visit per month conducted by community volunteers under the program.	-Reduced loneliness and isolation among vulnerable seniors
Conduct a health camp for the targeted seniors.	-A total of 22 seniors were screened for blood pressure, 29 for blood sugar, 22 for eyesight, and 18 received ear cleaning services. Additionally, 12 seniors were provided with eyeglasses, and 13 were referred for further medical management.	-Enhanced early detection and management of common age-related conditions and reduced preventable complications.  - Promoted a sense of dignity, inclusion, and emotional support among senior citizens.

### 3.5 Mental Health through Sports

#### **Objective 6: Support sports activities to aid healthy lifestyles and mental health for children and young people**

#### **Result 6: Reduced mental health issues, enhanced social skills, and increased self-esteem.**

In partnership with Gulu Sprinters Rugby Football Club, Cemelia Initiatives Africa supported rugby sports activities as a tool for psychosocial support to address mental health issues encouraging girls to remain in school. The partnership enabled training secondary school girls in rugby while providing counselling sessions on mental health and the impact of drug and substance abuse to a team of 28 players.

#### **Key Activities and Outputs/Outcomes**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Key Outputs</b>	<b>Key Outcomes</b>
Promote mental health through rugby football.	- 4 rugby events conducted. - 12 counselling sessions held on mental health related issues. - 4 mental health sessions were conducted, providing a platform for experience sharing and emotional support.	Increased mental health awareness, reduced stigma, and enhanced emotional wellbeing among participants through peer support and shared experiences.

### 4. Lessons Learned

- Building trust and ensuring the active participation of community members from the outset leads to higher acceptance and success rates. For example, involving local leaders in mobilizing support for community programs has proven effective.
- Partnering with organizations and engagement of volunteers with specific competencies to support achieving objectives has expanded the organization's capacity and reach, demonstrating the power of strategic alliances.
- Health camp activity increased demand services. This suggests a strong community need and consideration for planning scaling up to benefit more seniors. Among others, this can be achieved through strategic partnerships with other organizations and securing additional funding.

## 5. Implementation Challenges

- **Limited Market for Eco-Friendly Products:** The market for products made from banana pseudo stems, such as door mats, carpets and table mats, remains underdeveloped, limiting the potential for sustainable income generation.
- **Inadequate Funding:** There is a lack of sufficient funds to expand the coverage of economic empowerment initiatives, scaling up the scholarship program to support more vulnerable children, reading materials such as story books and extending more support to CBOs.
- **Unreliable Electricity Supply:** Frequent power outages have disrupted program activities. For instance, during banana pseudo stem fibre extraction, inconsistent electricity supply necessitated the costly use of a generator, hindering smooth operations.

## 6. Success stories

### 6.1 THREADS OF HOPE: LYDIA'S PATH TO RECLAIMING HER DREAM

#### Meet Lydia Rosemary

In May 2022, as Laker Lydia Rosemary sat at the sewing machine, learning to sew, her future felt uncertain. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, Lydia was forced to leave formal schooling after her father's shop business collapsed. Shortly afterwards, her father passed on, leaving her an orphan.

"I was a student at Pece Senior Secondary School, but the lockdown got me out of school and that saddened me but when my dad died, that was disastrous.... I had to start fetching water at 8:00 am for a restaurant situated in Gulu main market and finish in time to go for my tailoring class. That was my only source of income, my only hope," she narrates.



During this same period, Lydia decided to join Gulu Sprinters Rugby Football club to spend her time more meaningfully, enhance her social skills and reduce mental health issues she was experiencing. The founder of Cemelia Initiatives Africa had read her story in one of the newspapers and contacted her through the club's rugby coach.

"I was so excited when I got the announcement of the scholarship in 2022. I had challenges to raise fees and other scholastic materials, now I am happy for this offer to achieve my academic excellence. Through the scholarship, I am assured of my tuition and scholastic materials. I have been exposed to new opportunities; I am able to speak confidently in public and my dreams of completing my studies are within reach. I plan to continue to A-level if

the scholarship continues as my grandmother cannot afford to pay for my education. I pray that God expands the territory of the organization supporting me,” she exclaimed, looking up at the sky with a radiant smile.

Lydia was in Senior Two when her world fell apart, forcing her to drop out of school. However, through resilience and support, she sat for her Senior Four exams in October 2024 at Pece Senior Secondary School in Gulu District, and she passed. She is now set to pursue her A-Level studies in 2025. Her once shattered dream has been revived, and a new chapter of hope has begun.

## ***6.2 STRENGTH IN SPORT: ENHANCING GIRLS’ MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH RUGBY***

Gulu Sprinters Rugby Football Club (GUSFAB) is partnering with Cemelia Initiatives Africa to support key club activities. “The club is composed of young female athletes who actively engage in a variety of initiatives including club rugby, school rugby, income-generating activities, and environmental protection efforts in Gulu city and its surrounding areas.” Robert Ojok, the club’s Founder revealed.

Prior to this partnership, GUSFAB had no partner dedicated to addressing mental health issues for girls at the club. In 2023, Cemelia Initiatives Africa began bridging this gap by using rugby as a tool for psychosocial support, encouraging girls to remain in school. The school rugby program includes several components such as educational scholarships, providing learners with scholastic materials and offering sanitary supplies to vulnerable yet promising young girls in primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions.



“The partnership has enabled GUSFAB to train secondary school girls in rugby while providing counselling sessions on mental health and the impact of drug and substance abuse to a team of 28 players. Additionally, two of the clubs, players have benefited from educational scholarships that cover all school-related costs, including tuition, development fees, educational school trips,

stationery, lunch, uniforms among others. We are pleased with this partnership,” the club’s Coach disclosed.

In addition to the school rugby program, GUSFAB conducts a range of other initiatives including income-generating activities for young women who are out of school, club rugby events and environmental protection projects. The club is actively seeking partnerships and grants aligned

with its annual work plan to effectively support and empower young females through these diverse programs.

## 7. Conclusion

In its inaugural year of operation, Cemelia Initiatives Africa has demonstrated a strong commitment to community-driven development, reaching over 11,000 vulnerable individuals across Mitooma, Kasese, and Gulu districts. Through a diverse portfolio of programs focused on skills development, education, climate change, health, and wellness, the organization has made tangible progress in improving lives and building local resilience. Noteworthy achievements such as the transformation of agricultural waste into eco-products, delivery of mental health services, and partnerships that enhanced educational and environmental outcomes reflect a strategic and responsive approach to grassroots challenges.

While operational hurdles such as limited markets, funding gaps, and energy constraints posed challenges, Cemelia Initiatives Africa responded proactively, laying a solid foundation for long-term impact. The participatory and inclusive implementation model, alignment with local government priorities, and deliberate investment in capacity building and sustainability ensure that interventions are both relevant and resilient.

Moving forward, the organization is well-positioned to scale its impact by deepening partnerships, diversifying funding sources, and expanding its innovative community-based solutions. The lessons learned in 2024 will continue to shape and strengthen its mission to empower vulnerable populations and foster sustainable development in 2025 and beyond.