

Libraries in Imvepi and Rhino refugee settlements, Uganda



Painted by
Meta Richard

Creative Learning Haven

January - April 2025
Progress Report



Implemented by
Hope Rising South Sudan,
Youth Social Advocacy Team, and Lulu Tian



facebook.com/Creative
LearningHaven



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@creativelearninghaven



YouTube
@CreativeLearningHaven

What is Creative Learning Haven?

Creative Learning Haven (CLH) is a project to create and run community libraries in Imvepi and Rhino refugee settlements, Uganda. These are additional learning spaces that are the first of their kind in the camps.

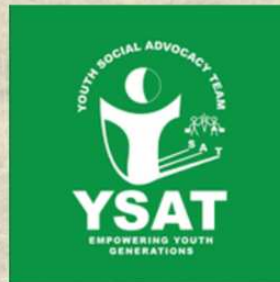
Our shared mission: Encourage reading and independent learning for all.

How we do it: Open reading, free book borrowing, and activities specifically created for the community's needs (income-generation, literacy, creative expression).

The first two CLH branches have been started by two registered refugee-led organizations and Luyao (Lulu) Tian:



Hope Rising South Sudan
(HoRiSS)



Youth Social Advocacy Team
(YSAT) Uganda



Lulu Tian

What this report will cover:

Background + Impact → Challenges and Next Steps → Financials and Fundraising

Since January 2025

Creative Learning Haven (CLH) has started **2 community libraries**:



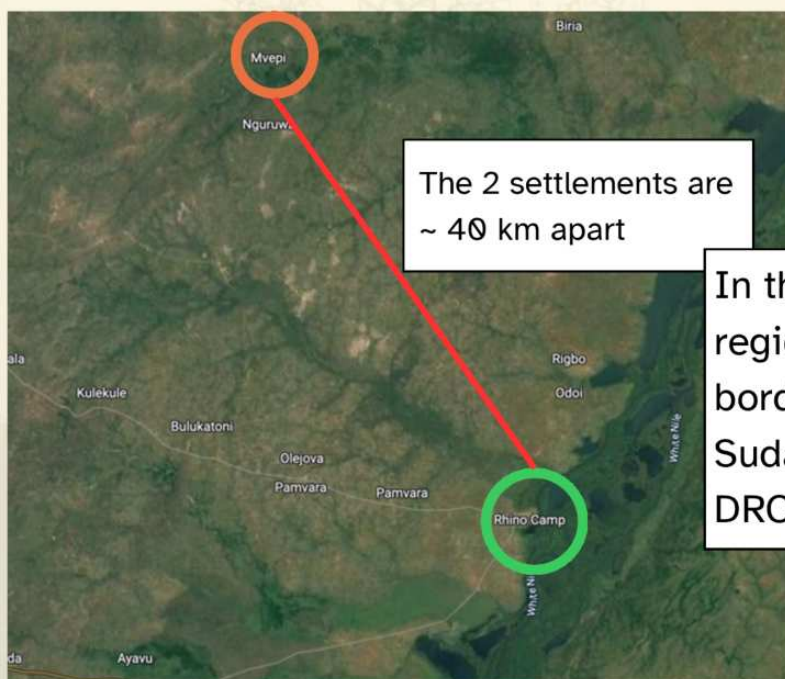
CLH in Imvepi Refugee Settlement

Zone 2 Tank 65 Youth Center - UNHCR Prospects Project



CLH in Rhino Refugee Settlement

Youth Social Advocacy Team (YSAT) Headquarters



In the West Nile region of Uganda, bordering South Sudan and the DRC.

While Imvepi and Rhino have other mobile library projects,
CLH are the only community libraries to primarily operate from a fixed location.

We are grateful to Hope Foundation and YSAT for providing these spaces.

About Imvepi, Rhino, South Sudan, Uganda, and being a “refugee”



“Refugee” is a word that everyone has a different relationship with.

Most refugees have lived in Imvepi and Rhino for at least 8 years now, primarily related to conflicts in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). People from these countries have a history of forced migration to Uganda going as far back as 1962 (Uganda’s independence).

95%

of CLH visitors are
South Sudanese

Imvepi stats: (2021)

Refugee population: 70,000+

- 82% women and children
- 98% from South Sudan
- 57% of youth out-of-school
- 68.1% without occupation

Rhino stats: (2021)

Refugee population: 124,000+

- 81% women and children
- 97% from South Sudan
- 70.6% without occupation

A bit about South Sudan:

South Sudan is the world’s newest country, gaining independence in 2011. The nation is home to 64 ethnic tribes. Some of the tribes represented within CLH family include: Kakua, Nuer, Pojulu, Bari, Kuku, Mundu, Keliko, Dinka.

A bit about Uganda:

The tribe of Ugandans in the West Nile area is Lugbara. They are also called “host” or “nationals”



We are all hoping for peace and a brighter future.

CLH is more than a place with books

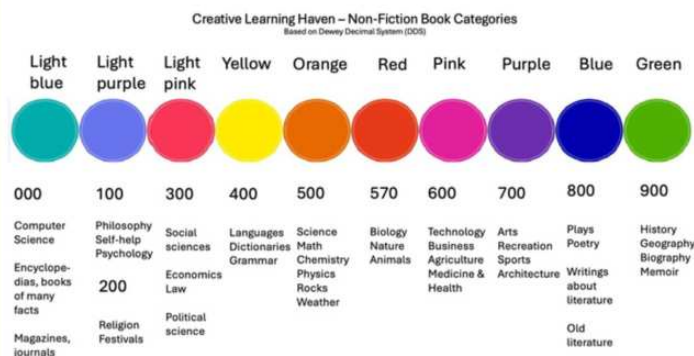
Because libraries are still a new concept, we do not let books just sit on shelves.

We believe in **proactively** creating a culture of reading and creativity.

Peter explains the book organization system to Imvepi Secondary School students



When you enter CLH, our library team explains the book categorization system, recommends books, and introduces new activities.



We use an adapted version of the Dewey Decimal system, based on the African Library Project Manual (2014)

What we've learned:

- **No nearby schools or organizations have a clear book categorization system.**
- **Fiction vs. Non-Fiction:** Most people cannot identify the difference.
- **Teacher and funding cuts in all schools** mean students lack support.
- **Costly school fees** lead to drop outs before completing secondary school.
- **Literacy and English** are challenges especially for primary students and women.

Why CLH is unique

- **CLH is the only place** in the settlements where books are organized systematically.
- Visitors feel welcome because staff are from **local refugee and host communities**, speak local languages, and act as brothers and sisters.
- **We run creative and literacy activities** based on community needs.
- **We empower local talent** to lead activities: 6 part-time volunteers.
- **We train staff with advanced project management and librarian skills:**
 - Book management and categorization
 - Google Drive, online research, Canva, Adobe Premiere Pro
 - Note-taking and proposal writing
 - Budgeting and finance



A new reading culture is emerging.

Currently, students are on school break in Imvepi and Rhino. Most families are farming and working to bring something extra home. **This is how things usually are.**

But these days, right when CLH opens, we have primary and secondary students waiting at our door, ready to read. **This is something new.**

“The future is already different.”

Zuka, Imvepi CLH staff

"We cannot miss this generation with education."

- Peter (CLH Imvepi Team Lead)

CLH Imvepi Team



**Implementing
partner:**

Hope Rising South
Sudan

- Community-Based-Organization (CBO)



Peter: Team Lead



Johnson



Harriet



Zuka

Activity Leads



Bida: Media Team



Winnie: Literacy Class



Patrick: Creative Writing

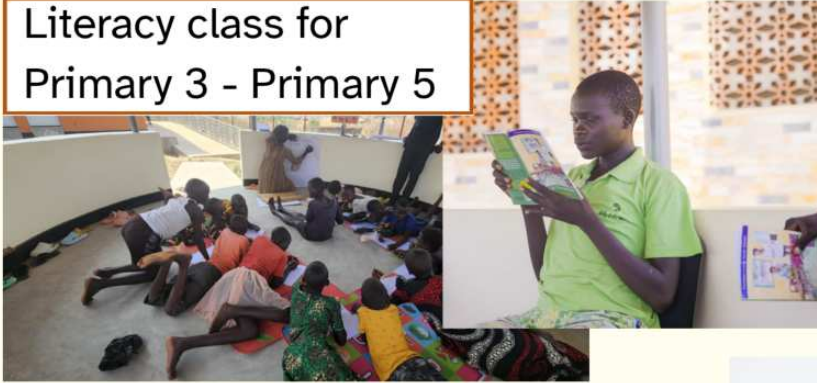


Francis: Drawing and Painting

CLH Activities

All of our activities incorporate reading and books. They were started based on the interests and needs of the communities.

Literacy class for
Primary 3 - Primary 5



Creative Expression for Kids



Drawing and Painting for Youths



Creative Writing



Income-generating activities

Design + Engineering
(CCB) for Kids



1. Creative Art for Women



Selling knitted
products for
20,000 UGX
(~\$5.50) /each

2. Media Team

Participants trained
during a 3-week digital
storytelling workshop are
now filming, editing, and
doing photography for hire



“Drawing takes my stress away”

Background photo +
quote from CLH
participant, Meta Richard

We create space for art and creativity because:

- These activities have been undervalued in the settlements.
- Library visitors express that they want to draw, take photos, write, and tell stories.
- Our participants tell us about the **mental health benefits** of these activities.



“This is the only free drawing and painting class in Uganda’s West Nile region”

- Deputy Head Teacher,
Imvepi Secondary School



The voices of Imvepi and Rhino are important. They should be remembered.

Our Mission

1. Support a reading culture and literacy for all
2. Run activities that encourage creativity, storytelling, and art
3. Connect activities with income-generating opportunities
4. Support schools and people out of school with an additional learning space



Knowledge is power.

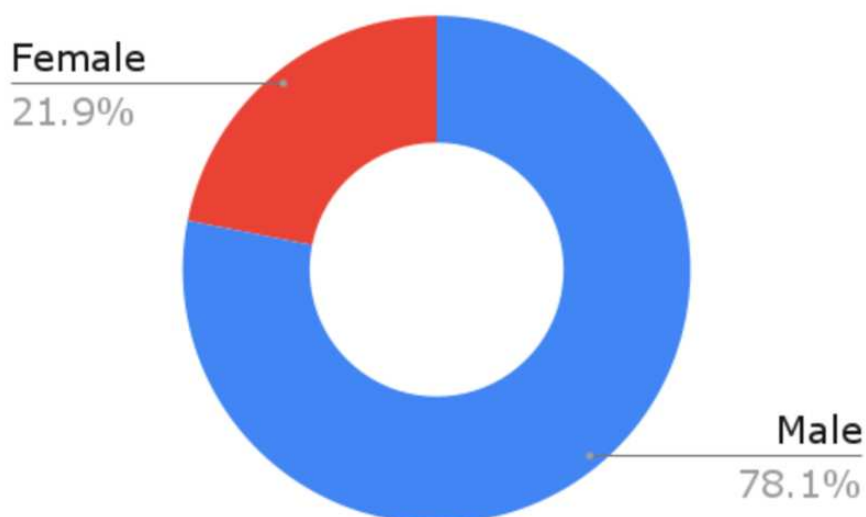
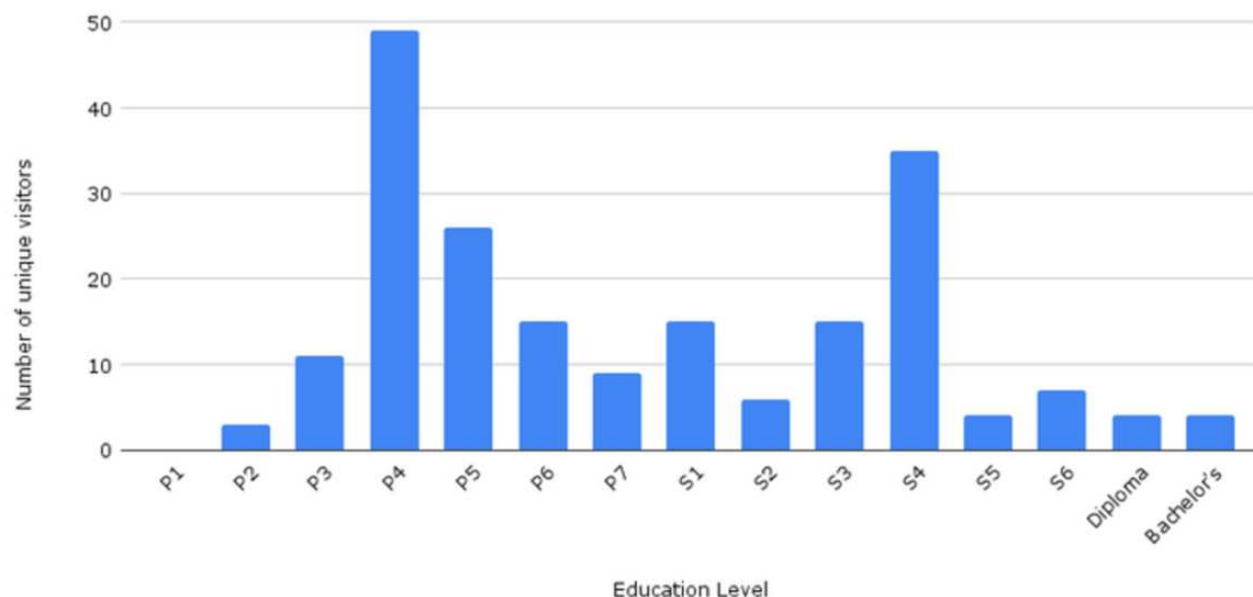
- Teach people how to learn independently.
- Teach people how to organize and understand different types of information.
- Teach people that they are capable of learning anything. It is never too late.
- **Libraries help people learn even when formal education is limited.**

For all CLH staff, categorizing books was something new at first. Now we teach others.

Population served

(data from CLH Imvepi, April 2025)

Highest level of education completed (n=203)



215 unique individuals visited

88 unique individuals in weekly activities

At CLH, we tell our own stories.



Again, numbers are only part of the picture.

And most of us here are fed up with narratives that only show war, poverty, and sadness. Most of us want to tell our own stories, in our own ways.



Over the next few months, we still start posting short video and photo stories on our Instagram and Facebook accounts.

These stories will be about education, the library, our friends, our daily lives, our histories.



Follow our stories:



Facebook

facebook.com/CreativeLearningHaven



Instagram

[@creativelearninghaven](https://instagram.com/creativelearninghaven)



YouTube

[@CreativeLearningHaven](https://youtube.com/CreativeLearningHaven)

Creative Learning Haven

Executive Summary



1. Highlights: January - April 2025

- **Started 2 community libraries**
- **>1500 books transported**
- Served **353 unique individuals** in April 2025
- Trained **8 full-time staff** from local refugee and national communities
- **7 weekly activities**
- **4+ weeks of filmmaking workshops**
- Supporting students in **low-resource schools** and **out-of-school** populations
- **Efficient, community-centered implementation** (total spending <\$8000)

2. Vision: Increased access to learning and creativity will change the futures of our nations (primarily South Sudan and Uganda).

3. What's Next: Fundraising, Partnerships, Expanded Impact

Every penny you invest in CLH goes directly to the communities, without delay.

CLH is effective because our teamwork and community relationships are genuine. We eliminate unnecessary overheads and focus on community needs. We have accomplished a lot on a tight budget, and we know we can do much more with increased support. Next steps include mobile libraries for remote areas, literacy classes for women, and more income-generating activities.

How to support CLH

1. Become a one-time or **monthly donor** on GoFundMe:
<https://www.gofundme.com/f/uganda-refugee-library-project>
 - a. **\$10** / month: Provides weekly literacy classes for kids
 - b. **\$36** / month: Provides Wifi to one library
 - c. **\$80** / month: Funds mobile libraries for 4 remote locations
2. **Share** this report and our GoFundMe with your circles
3. **Contact Lulu** with ideas for partnerships or collaborations

We are eternally grateful to our supporters. CLH is only possible because of you all.

Donate here: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/uganda-refugee-library-project>

Thank you! Shukran! (Arabic) Iyete! (Kakwa)

Support in Imvepi and Rhino

Awa Primary School
BRAC Uganda
ChildVoice
Christ the King Secondary School
Creative Innovation Center (CIC)
Dadaka Hellon
Emmanuel Primary School
Enock & Celina
Hope Foundation Uganda
Hope Primary School
Hope Rising South Sudan
Imvepi and Rhino Refugee Welfare Committee (RWC)
Imvepi House of Prayer
Imvepi Secondary School
Inyau Primary School
Katiku Primary School

Kulika Uganda
Lanya Primary School
Lungamere Primary School
Mat Primary School
Ocea Primary School
Office of the Prime Minister Imvepi, Rhino, & Arua
Pangea
Stella
Streams of Hope
Supiri Primary School
Torit Primary School
Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation (TPO)
UNHCR
UNICEF
WarChild Holland
Windle Trust Uganda
Yikuru Secondary School



Youth for Peace Initiative
YSAT Uganda
ZOA Uganda
and many other friends and family...

Featuring photos by: Alex Manase, Johnson Sam, Lulu Tian, Meta Richard, Otim Francis, Peter Hardrock, Robert Anguyo, Samuel Lemi

Books, Equipment, Monetary + Other Support

Aidat Kawesi	Christopher McBride	Janet Casey	Martha Thompson	St. Peter's Anglican Church
Ajay Jeyakumar + family	Coco Zhang	Jennifer Kim Wasson	Maya Chakrabarty	Susan Winship
Akosua-Asamoabea Ampofo	Cynthia Martin	John Valpey	Michaela O'Shaughnessy	Suzanne Fisher
Alison Hynd	Dakyum Lee	Joseph Kebartas	MIT D-Lab	Tarek Meah
Alyssa Pierce	Dan Sweeney	Joyce Westner	Nancy Adams	Therese Henderson
Ambrose Photography	Em Cegielski	JP Sniadecki	Naomi Zidon	Tian Tian
Amelie Chan	Emily Huang	Julia Kim, Sue Kim	Nicole Arangio	Tiffany Chen
Amos Kimera	Emily Lee	Julia Mongo	Nile Cargo Carrier	Victoria Correa
Amy Smith	Faith Victoria Ni	Julie Tung	Pamela Lepkowski	Victoria Li
Andrea Puma	Fehmida Chipty	Justin Yu	Peihui Zheng	Victoria Ng
Anonymous donors	Feng Yang	Karthik Pandian	Peili Zhang	Weimin Cai
Ari Jacobovits	Frances Phelps	Kate Trimble	Peizhong Wang	Wenyu Wang
Blair St. George Wright	Friends of Robbins Library	Katherine Rosenfield	Rachel Mill	Winchester News
Boston Public Library	Friends of the South Boston	Kathryn Tso	Robbins Library	Winchester Public Library
- South Boston	Branch Library	Katrina	Robby MacBain	Winchester Stroll
Carolina Sutherland	Ge Wang	Kyle Henry	Rose Njuguna	Xiaolu Wang
Charlene Wang	Geng Liu	Laura Doggett	Roy Xing	Xing Memorial Fund
Charlotte Milan	Geoffrey "Simple"	Laura Schulz	Samuel Lee	Yan Lu
Chen Lin	Hailin Yan	Lei Zhou	Sanjna Ravichandar	Yiming Tian
Cherry Li	Hao Wang	Lenna Bablouzian	Sarah Gannon	Yingchun Ran and Jeff Li
Chris Yang	Heewon Lee	Lily Daley	Sarah Yang	Yuan Yu
Christopher Callahan	Heidi Rutstein DiLeo	Luo Xing	South Sudanese	Zhou Jian
Christopher Carter	Ines Sommer	Lydia Kim	Enrichment for Families	
	Isha Khanzode	Martha Stickney Stocker		