



## OUR HISTORY AT A GLANCE...

<p><b>2007</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The official date of registration – 21 September 2007</li> <li>• Opened the Learning Centre in Kigali teaching English to 70 students a day – mainly widows and orphans of the genocide.</li> <li>• Began a partnership with a Rwandan charity called Fair Child Youth Foundation and opened the first public library in Rwanda.</li> <li>• Started offering literacy, English and business skills training to 300 impoverished and vulnerable women in Kigali.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2008</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported 47 vulnerable and poor women in Uganda (some of whom were HIV positive, child mothers, former child soldiers and widows) for five years, providing them with the start-up costs for setting up small income generating activities and a Village Savings and Loan Association.</li> <li>• Began working with Peace Ruzage, a Rwandan woman who was helping some 300 impoverished and vulnerable women to organize themselves into small self-help associations. Peace went on to establish Aspire, a women's empowerment programme in Kigali.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2009</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opened the Rwanda Multi-Learning Centre where four members of staff offered beginners, intermediate and advanced English classes. Receiving 120 students a year, the Learning Centre also offered IT and business skills training and help with CV writing and job interview workshops. The ReGeneration Music Centre (within the Rwanda Multi Learning Centre) provided group and individual music lessons to the students, including guitar, piano and singing.</li> <li>• Started working with SURF to build a community centre, a health centre and maternity hospital in an extremely deprived area called Ntarama, 45 minutes south of Kigali. The health centre was opened in 2009.</li> <li>• Supported 55 vulnerable women in Patongo, northern Uganda to set up a women's group called Ribbe Aye Teko (Together We Are Strong). Gave them training in basic business skills and gave them a grant to set up individual income generating projects.</li> <li>• Started community awareness raising sessions in Patongo, northern Uganda in family planning and HIV/AIDS which reached the participants in Ribbe Aye Teko, carers of people with HIV, prisoners, senior school children and men and women in the local community.</li> <li>• Took our lay counsellor training programme to Darfuri refugee camps in Chad, where we provided basic counselling training to 100 women and men, most of whom were teachers or worked with children. Also gave more advanced training to staff from NGO ACT, who were working as counsellors in the refugee camps.</li> </ul>

## 2010

- Started our peer trauma counselling training programme, led by Dr. Barbara Bauer, in Patongo, northern Uganda. Patongo was one of the biggest and most notorious refugee camps in northern Uganda, sheltering some 40,000 people fleeing from the violations committed by the Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan Defence Force during the 20-year civil war.
- Set up a drop-in centre in Patongo where community members were able to access one-to-one counselling. It also provided information on post-traumatic stress, alcoholism, domestic violence, family planning, and other life skills such as nutrition and hygiene.
- Worked with UK charity Jubilee Action (now Chance for Childhood) by providing counselling training and leadership and lifeskills training to former child soldiers.
- Supported a group of young women who attended the Rwanda Multi-Learning Centre to set up a bakery called Wanda Bakery. Before long they were making wedding cakes on demand, as well as providing cakes to the British Embassy in Kigali.
- Set up Aspire's women's empowerment training programme in Kigali Rwanda. A compound was secured where the women received all their training. Through a combination of education and vocational training, it increased the income and reduced the poverty of 620 Rwandan women. It encouraged the setting up of cooperatives and offered holistic training to the women and their partners, including sexual reproductive health, hygiene, positive masculinity, business skills etc.

## 2011

- Set up an education fund called the Lioness Fund in Patongo, northern Uganda to pay for 11 former child soldiers (mostly girls) to resume the education they had missed during the civil war, through kidnapping and spending years in the bush as prisoners of the Lord's Resistance Army.
- Expanded Aspire Rwanda's women's empowerment programme by providing training in women's rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, rights within marriage, inheritance rights and land rights. Women who had had traditional marriages learnt that without being legally married they had no rights. At the end of the training 26 women wanted to legalise their marriages and Aspire started holding celebrations to mark this event.
- Expanded the counselling programme in Patongo, northern Uganda by setting up a team of Outreach Counsellors who received intensive training in trauma counselling. Working in pairs (one woman, one man) they were allocated two community groups per pair in outlying villages. They were given bicycles so they could reach them easily, and as well as providing peer counselling, they were able to share other public health information e.g. nutrition, family planning, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, women's rights and support with Village Savings and Loans Associations.
- Distributed 2,000 mosquito nets in Patongo, northern Uganda where malaria is rife, and offered training and demonstrations in their correct use.
- Provided all the women in the Ribbe Aye Teko women's group in Patongo, northern Uganda with bicycles which made their lives much easier e.g. taking their children to hospital, reaching their small-holdings, collecting water and firewood.
- Provide all 53 women in the Ribbe Aye Teko women's group in Patongo, northern Uganda with start-up capital to set up small agricultural businesses.
- Supported a group of seven young women to set up a bakery in Rwanda called Wanda Bakery, selling their produce to the ex-patriate community in Kigali. Before long they were baking weekly and selling much of their produce to the British Embassy.

<b>2012</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extended our work in Uganda by setting up and training a network of 24 community counsellors who raised awareness of PTSD and supported people suffering from trauma in the aftermath of the civil war in Uganda.</li> <li>Trained five of our community counsellors in HIV counselling who supported the HIV clinical nurse and offered pre and post-HIV counselling, encouraging people to come forward for treatment and holding awareness raising sessions into the prevention, treatment and care of HIV.</li> <li>Set up free on-site childcare for the women attending Aspire's vocational training programme. Known as the Aspire Childcare Centres, they provided day care and early years education for 150 children from the ages of 1 to 6 years old.</li> </ul>
<b>2013</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replicated our Kigali Aspire project in Rutunga, a rural area and offered vocational training in agriculture for 450 vulnerable women as well as training in life skills, business skills, literacy and efficient farming in Rutunga, Rwanda.</li> <li>Set up free childcare centres for these women so that they could focus on their learning.</li> </ul>
<b>2014</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Started agricultural projects in Patongo, Uganda with our community outreach groups. 840 community members were trained and received agricultural inputs e.g. chickens, crops etc., to start farming and to generate income.</li> <li>Set up income generating projects at Aspire Rwanda, by offering the women 6-month training courses in hairdressing and makeup and cookery. This resulted in 98% of the women using these skills to earn money.</li> </ul>
<b>2015</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Started Village Savings and Loans with all our 28 community groups in Patongo, northern Uganda.</li> <li>Planted and cultivated 5 community vegetable gardens in Patongo, which as well as providing nutritious food, act as training and demonstration gardens for the community.</li> </ul>
<b>2016</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Started a new vocational training course in childcare, housekeeping and cookery at Aspire, Kigali, Rwanda.</li> <li>Started a new agricultural project in Rutunga, Rwanda for vulnerable women. They were training in cultivating fruit trees and were given land and trees to plant and grow. The fruit farm was designated a 'model farm' by the local government.</li> </ul>
<b>2017</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launched a new community mental health project in four areas in Agago district. With monthly mental health clinics, community outreach and setting up of self-help groups this project reached 12,253 community members.</li> <li>Started a pilot project providing group counselling for 250 young survivors of Rwanda's genocide. It continues to run to this day with a new cohort of 250 participants each year.</li> </ul>
<b>2018</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launched our first community mental health project, working with seven communities in two districts in Sierra Leone supporting 11,605 community members. Our US psychologists, led by Dr. Barbara Bauer went to Sierra Leone where they trained the whole team and some local government officials in counselling skills.</li> <li>Delivered a training programme in Iraqi Kurdistan, led by our US psychologists where they trained counsellors who were helping to support Yazidi survivors of 'Islamic State'.</li> </ul>
<b>2019</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Started a 3-year project to provide livelihood support to 450 people with mental health issues and their caregivers in Agago District, Uganda.</li> </ul>

<p><b>2020</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Began a 6-month project in Port Loko district, Sierra Leone to provide mental health support to over 200 people with mental illness and their caregivers with the offer of counselling, referral and treatment for mental health in the context of Covid-19. The project was extended for a further six months, and by the end of the year, 2,490 people received counselling, attended clinics, joined SHGs, received medication and/or attended mental health education and outreach sessions. Nine secondary schools also received Covid-19 and mental health awareness sessions reaching around 800 students.</li> <li>• Introduced provision of epilepsy medication to 56 people with epilepsy, some of whom received such medication for the first time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2021</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched a 3-year project to provide livelihood support for 180 people with mental health issues and their caregivers, and up to 1,080 of their family members, in Port Loko district, Sierra Leone.</li> <li>• Raised funds to help 250 families in northern Uganda to plant vegetable gardens &amp; avoid food shortages inflicted by Covid-19.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2022</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Took our established community mental health model to two new sub-counties of Agago district, Uganda, where there was previously no mental health provision. Over 200 people attended the first mental health clinic in Adilang sub-county.</li> </ul>