

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



RURAL SMILES
FOUNDATION

Phone :
+256 (0)200901387

Webstie:
www.ruralsmiles.org

About Rural Smiles Foundation

The Rural Smiles Foundation was founded in 2022 with a vision to advance the health, digital, and economic rights of vulnerable populations, particularly those in rural areas of Uganda. Our mission is to create lasting change through community empowerment, advocacy, technology innovation, research, and service delivery. We work with communities, local governments, and international partners to tackle the barriers that prevent people from accessing essential services, resources, and opportunities.

At the heart of the Rural Smiles Foundation is a deep commitment to social justice and equality. We are dedicated to addressing the critical issues facing rural communities, especially women, children, and other marginalized groups. Our work spans three key areas: health and health rights, digital rights and internet freedom, and economic empowerment.

Health and Health Rights

Our health programs are designed to ensure that every individual has access to essential healthcare services. From cancer awareness campaigns to reproductive health education, we aim to remove barriers to healthcare access and promote better health outcomes for rural populations. We believe that health is a fundamental human right, and through our programs, we strive to make health services more accessible, particularly for underserved communities.

Digital Rights and Internet Freedom

In today's increasingly digital world, access to technology is a powerful tool for empowerment. The Rural Smiles Foundation is committed to bridging the digital divide in rural Uganda. Our digital literacy programs focus on providing rural students, teachers, and community members with the skills they need to thrive in the digital age. By increasing access to information and technology, we are not only improving educational outcomes but also opening doors to new economic opportunities and enhanced civic participation.

Economic Empowerment

We understand that sustainable economic growth is key to lifting individuals and communities out of poverty. Our economic empowerment initiatives focus on providing access to financial services, training in entrepreneurship, and skills development programs that enable individuals to create and manage their own businesses. Through these initiatives, we empower individuals, especially women, to achieve financial independence and improve their livelihoods.

As we move forward, the Rural Smiles Foundation is committed to creating lasting impact by building stronger, more resilient communities. Our work is rooted in a holistic approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of health, education, and economic empowerment. We believe that by working together, we can create a society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.



smiles@ruralsmiles.org

Executive Director's Message



Ahaisibwe Geoffrey Mwaka

E.D, Rural Smiles Foundation

As we reflect on 2024, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for all that we have accomplished as the Rural Smiles Foundation. This year has been one of quiet resilience and strategic development. While we operated under the radar in terms of public-facing projects, the foundation was focused on building a solid internal structure that will support our mission for the long term.

2024 was not just about keeping the lights on — it was about strengthening our capacity to deliver on our promise to empower vulnerable communities in Uganda. We finalized our 5-year strategic plan, which provides clear direction for the next chapter of our journey. We set the stage for growth, innovation, and increased impact as we strive to improve the health, economic, and digital rights of the communities we serve.

Our work in 2024 was characterized by a commitment to fostering partnerships, both at the local and international levels. We forged new relationships, expanded our network, and made significant strides toward achieving our vision of a healthy, inclusive, and poverty-free society. The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Kibaale District Local Government and our partnership with the Kitara Civil Society Organizations Network (KCSO) are key examples of how we are building a collaborative ecosystem to effect positive change.

As we look to 2025, we are ready to amplify our efforts, expand our reach, and implement projects that will create lasting transformation in rural Uganda. Our commitment to creating safer, healthier, and more inclusive communities remains steadfast. We have laid a strong foundation, and with your continued support, we are confident that the next phase of our work will be even more impactful.

I invite you to read through this report and learn more about the milestones we achieved in 2024, the lessons we've learned, and the exciting plans we have for the future. It is because of your support, trust, and partnership that we are able to make a real difference in the lives of vulnerable individuals. Together, we are transforming communities and creating opportunities for a brighter tomorrow.

Thank you for your continued support.

Ahaisibwe Geoffrey Mwaka
Executive Director,
Rural Smiles Foundation
geofrey@ruralsmiles.org

Key Developments in 2024

The year 2024 marked a period of strategic growth and internal consolidation for the Rural Smiles Foundation. While our operations were more focused on organizational resilience and strengthening foundational structures, it was a year of significant milestones that will serve as a springboard for future growth and impact. From forging new partnerships to finalizing a 5-year strategic plan, we laid the groundwork for scaling our efforts and expanding our reach in the coming years. Below are some of the key developments that defined our journey in 2024.

1

Completion of the 5-Year Strategic Plan

The Rural Smiles Foundation finalized its 5-year strategic plan, which took effect in 2024. The strategic plan outlines our vision, mission, and priorities for the next five years. It focuses on expanding our impact in key areas, including health rights, digital empowerment, economic empowerment, and strengthening civic space. With clear goals and a solid framework, we are set to move forward with direction and purpose.

2

Establishment of the Rural Smiles Foundation Office

The establishment of a permanent office at God's Mercy Building (Karuguuza Towers) in Kibaale Town Council marked a significant milestone. This office serves as our base of operations and is vital for coordinating our programs, engaging with the community, and providing the necessary administrative and operational support.

3

Joining KCSON (10 July 2024)

In July, we became a member of the Kitara Civil Society Organizations Network (KCSON), positioning ourselves within a stronger network for advocacy, resource-sharing, and collaborative efforts aimed at improving rural communities in the Bunyoro sub-region.

4

Memorandum of Understanding with Kibaale District Local Government (22 October 2024)

The MoU signed with the Kibaale District Local Government in October 2024 formalized our partnership and commitment to working together on key initiatives aimed at improving health, economic, and social rights in the district.

5

Pilot Project: Justice for Widows' Land Rights

We successfully implemented a pilot project focused on land rights for widows in Mugarama Sub-county, Kibaale District. Funded by Het Actiefonds, the project sought to empower widows to assert their land rights, ensuring access to justice and fair treatment in the face of gender-based challenges in land ownership.

Strategic Plan for 2024-2029

The Rural Smiles Foundation has completed its 5-year strategic plan, effective from 2024, providing a clear roadmap for the next chapter of our work. This strategic plan outlines our mission, vision, and goals for the next five years, guiding us toward a future of sustainable growth and lasting impact. The foundation's commitment to promoting and advancing health, digital, and economic rights for vulnerable communities remains central to our operations. The following are the key strategic priorities and goals that will shape our efforts for the next five years:

1 Health Rights and Access to Healthcare

The foundation is committed to improving access to healthcare, particularly in rural areas where services are often scarce or inadequate. Our health initiatives will focus on:

- **Expanding Cancer Prevention and Care:** Building on our success in raising awareness about breast and cervical cancer, we will expand our cancer awareness programs to additional regions. This will include mobilizing communities, training local health workers, and providing access to screening and care services.
- **Maternal and Reproductive Health:** We will continue our efforts to improve maternal and reproductive health services, with a focus on reducing maternal mortality rates, ensuring safe deliveries, and providing critical postnatal care in rural maternity wards.
- **Mental Health and Well-being:** We aim to integrate mental health into our health programs, providing counseling, support services, and resources for individuals affected by mental health issues, especially within marginalized communities.

2 Digital Rights and Access to Technology

In an increasingly digital world, access to technology is a fundamental tool for empowerment. Over the next five years, we will:

- **Bridge the Digital Divide:** We will expand our digital literacy programs, offering training to students, teachers, and community members in rural areas. Our goal is to ensure that individuals in underserved regions have the skills needed to thrive in the digital economy.
- **Improve Internet Access:** We will collaborate with partners to increase access to affordable internet and technology, making sure that rural communities are not left behind in the global digital transformation.
- **Advocate for Digital Rights and Privacy:** We will continue to advocate for the protection of digital rights, including privacy, freedom of expression, and access to information. This will be crucial as the digital landscape in Uganda and globally continues to evolve.

3 Collaboration and Partnership Development

Our success depends on the strength of our partnerships. The foundation will:

- **Collaborate with Local and International Organizations:** We will continue to forge partnerships with local governments, civil society organizations, and international donors to amplify the impact of our work. This includes partnerships with organizations working in health, education, gender equality, and human rights.
- **Engage with the Private Sector:** We will seek to engage with the private sector to leverage resources, knowledge, and technology for social good. Collaborations with businesses will help us scale our programs and reach more communities in need.

Strategic Plan for 2024-2029 Cont'd

4

Economic Empowerment and Financial Inclusion

Achieving economic independence is essential for creating sustainable livelihoods. Our strategic plan outlines key initiatives to empower communities economically:

- **Microfinance and Loans:** We will establish a financial arm within the foundation to provide microloans, savings programs, and financial education to vulnerable groups, particularly women. This will enable them to start or grow small businesses, create jobs, and improve their economic well-being.
- **Skills Development and Entrepreneurship:** In partnership with local and international organizations, we will continue offering vocational training and entrepreneurial support to enhance skills, foster innovation, and create income-generating opportunities for individuals in rural communities.
- **Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment:** We are committed to empowering women economically by providing access to resources, training, and financial services tailored to their needs. This will help close the gender gap in economic opportunities and improve livelihoods for women.

5

Strengthening Civic Engagement and Advocacy

Our strategic plan recognizes the importance of civic engagement in creating lasting change. Over the next five years, we will:

- **Advocate for Policy Reform:** We will continue to advocate for policies that support the rights of marginalized communities, including women, youth, and vulnerable groups. This will involve working with local governments, international organizations, and grassroots communities to promote policy reforms that enhance access to services, reduce inequalities, and protect human rights.
- **Empower Communities for Active Participation:** We will invest in grassroots organizing, training community leaders, and promoting civic participation at all levels. This will ensure that community members are not only recipients of aid but also active participants in shaping the future of their communities.
- **Expand Human Rights Defenders' Support:** We will increase our support for human rights defenders, particularly those working on land rights, gender justice, and digital rights. This will include providing security, legal support, and capacity-building resources to HRDs advocating for the rights of vulnerable communities.

6

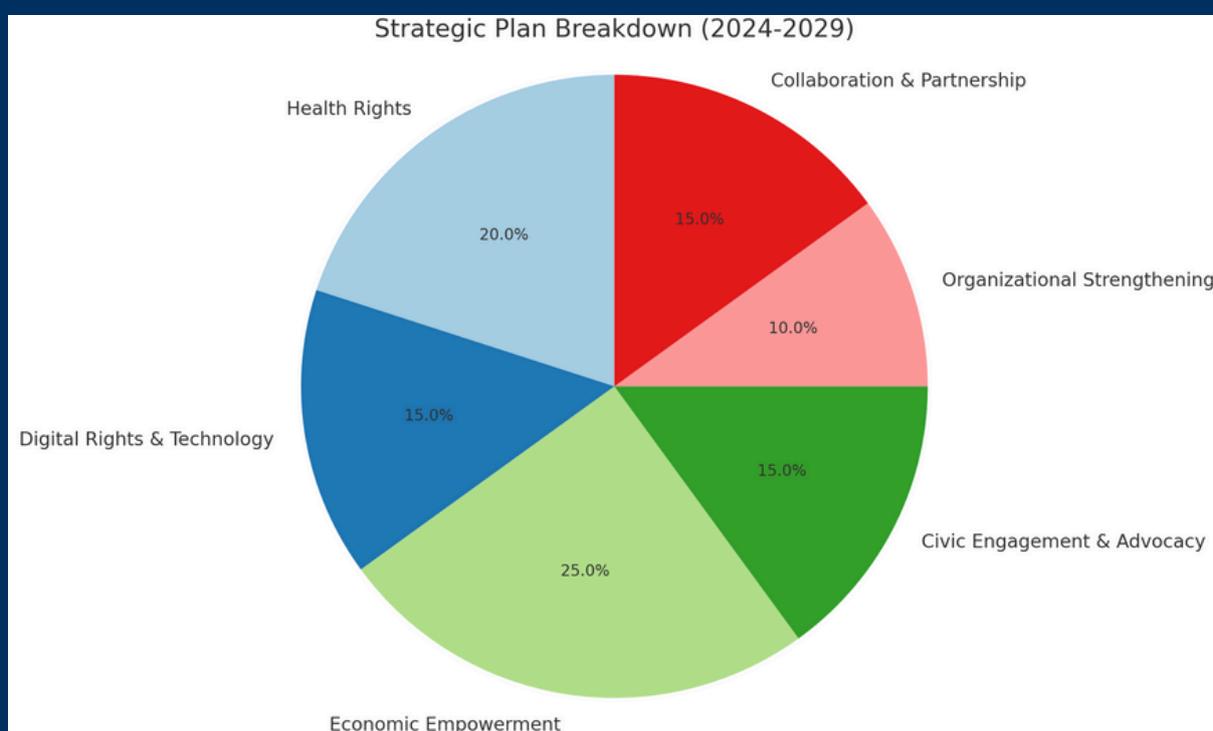
Organizational Strengthening and Sustainability

To achieve the goals set out in this strategic plan, the Rural Smiles Foundation recognizes the need for a robust and sustainable organizational structure. Key initiatives will include:

- **Building Internal Capacity:** We will continue to invest in staff development, ensuring that our team is well-equipped to carry out the foundation's mission effectively. This includes providing professional development opportunities and enhancing leadership within the organization.
- **Financial Sustainability:** We will diversify our funding sources, seeking grants, partnerships, and donations to support our programs. We will also work towards ensuring that the financial arm of the foundation remains self-sustaining, helping us scale our efforts in a sustainable manner.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** We will strengthen our monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress, assess the impact of our programs, and ensure accountability to our donors, partners, and beneficiaries. This will allow us to learn from our experiences, adapt our strategies, and achieve greater impact.

Looking Forward

As we move into 2025 and beyond, the Rural Smiles Foundation is poised for transformative growth. Our 5-year strategic plan is designed to address the most pressing issues facing rural communities in Uganda, with a focus on empowerment, inclusion, and sustainability. With a clear vision and strong commitment to our mission, we are confident that our efforts will have a lasting, positive impact on the lives of vulnerable individuals and communities.



Here are the key highlights for the graph:

- **Health Rights (20%):** Focus on expanding healthcare access, including cancer prevention, maternal health, and mental health services.
- **Digital Rights & Technology (15%):** Bridging the digital divide through digital literacy and advocacy for digital rights.
- **Economic Empowerment (25%):** Largest focus area, with initiatives on financial services, vocational training, and microfinance.
- **Civic Engagement & Advocacy (15%):** Strengthening community voices and advocating for inclusive policies.
- **Organizational Strengthening (10%):** Internal capacity-building to ensure sustainability and efficient operations.
- **Collaboration & Partnership (15%):** Building strategic partnerships with local and international stakeholders.

How We Work

EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY AND POLICY CHANGE



We advocate for the rights of marginalized communities and work to influence policy changes that support their needs. Our programs are based on data and research, ensuring they are impactful and responsive to the challenges at hand. By raising awareness and engaging with policymakers, we aim to create a supportive environment for vulnerable groups, addressing issues such as land rights, gender equality, and healthcare access.

HOLISTIC, SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS



Our approach is holistic, addressing the interconnected challenges that rural communities face. We work to improve access to healthcare, create economic opportunities, and expand digital access in a way that ensures long-term positive outcomes. Sustainability is at the core of our efforts, as we build local capacity, foster community ownership, and develop scalable models that continue to benefit communities long after the project ends.

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING



Our focus is on empowering individuals and communities through education and skill-building. We offer digital literacy training, vocational education, and financial management programs, providing people with the tools they need to improve their livelihoods and achieve economic independence. We build local capacity to ensure that communities can take ownership of their development, creating pathways to long-term sustainability.

COMMUNITY-CENTERED COLLABORATION



We prioritize working directly with rural communities, ensuring that their voices shape the programs we implement. By actively involving local stakeholders in decision-making, we create solutions that are relevant, effective, and sustainable. Through strong partnerships with local governments, civil society organizations, and international donors, we collaborate to leverage resources and expertise, amplifying the scale and impact of our initiatives.

Financial Overview for 2024

The Rural Smiles Foundation is committed to ensuring transparency and accountability in all our financial operations. We aim to use the resources entrusted to us efficiently and effectively to maximize the impact of our programs. Below is a summary of our financial performance and position for 2024.

Income Sources

The Foundation's income in 2024 was primarily derived from a combination of grants, donations, and partnerships. These funds allowed us to implement key programs and strengthen our organizational infrastructure.

REVENUE	2024 (UGX)	2023 (UGX)
Donations and Grants	319,956,106	193,147,703
Other Income	5,702,156	58,702,156
Total Revenue	325,658,262	251,849,859

Expenditures

Our expenditures in 2024 focused on implementing our programs, supporting staff, and ensuring the sustainability of the Foundation. The breakdown of spending was as follows:

EXPENDITURE	2024 (UGX)	2023 (UGX)
Direct Project Expenses	102,601,661	211,627,935
Administration Expenses	30,522,324	33,721,924
Total	133,123,985	159,183,825

Surplus (Deficit) of the year **192,534,277** **6,500,000**

Our Staff by 2024

By 2024, the Rural Smiles Foundation has built a diverse and dynamic team dedicated to advancing our mission. Our staff includes professionals in various roles, ranging from program management, advocacy, communications, to financial and administrative support. We have a balanced team with both full-time employees and part-time contributors, working together to ensure the effective implementation of our projects. The Foundation prioritizes building a strong internal capacity, and our team plays a crucial role in the success of our programs, driving the organization's growth and impact.

NAME	POSITION
Ahaisibwe Geofrey Mwaka	Executive Director
Nakayiwa Joselin	Administrator
Niyirinda Hellen	ICT Officer
Ahaisibwe Rosemary	Finance Officer
Akusi Emmanuel	Field Officer
S Meth	Project Officer
Namata Irene	Volunteer
Mukisa Patrick	Volunteer
Wabyoona Julius	Volunteer
Nantale Zulufah	Volunteer

THANK YOU

As we conclude our 2024 Annual Report, we want to extend our deepest gratitude to all our partners, donors, supporters, and communities. Your belief in our mission and your continued support have been instrumental in helping us make a tangible difference in the lives of vulnerable individuals in rural Uganda.

While 2024 was a year of internal growth and strategic planning, we are excited for the journey ahead. The foundation we have laid will propel us into a future of greater impact, with clear goals and a solid framework for achieving them. We are committed to empowering communities, amplifying voices, and creating sustainable solutions for health, digital, and economic rights.

We look forward to working alongside all of you as we move into 2025 and beyond, striving for a more inclusive, healthy, and prosperous future for all.

Rural Smiles Foundation

Email: smiles@ruralsmiles.org

Website: www.ruralsmiles.org

Office Address:

God's Mercy Building (Karuguuza Towers)
Level 1, Ruharo Road
Plot 315 Block 244, Kibaale Town Council
Uganda
P.O Box 560218 Kagadi

