



# Can't Wait to Learn

Closing the education gap  
through technology

# Uganda



# Education in their hands

Can't Wait to Learn is a proven digital game-based learning model designed with and for children affected by conflict.



It is a curriculum-based, context-specific solution, which brings together the know-how of locally based education stakeholders, such as ministries of Education, international and community-based organisations alongside international expertise in software development, game development and design.

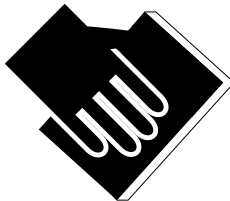
The result is a self-guided serious gaming format accessed on tablets that takes children through Ministry of Education approved curriculum, providing opportunity for children to work toward primary level

certification. In this way, Can't Wait to Learn aims to reinforce the education pipeline across informal and formal education, to decrease drop-out rates and encourage transition into formal primary and secondary education. In Uganda, Can't Wait to Learn is helping children gain basic maths and reading skills in accelerated education centres and primary schools.

Above — Child playing Uganda Maths 1-3 game

## THE SITUATION

OVERCROWDING  
+  
TEACHER  
SHORTAGES  
=  
LOW QUALITY  
EDUCATION



## EDUCATION RESPONSE PLAN

The Education Response Plan for Uganda highlights classroom shortage - critical in all districts, but particularly in refugee settlements. The resulting overcrowding, coupled with teacher shortages, impact on the quality of education.



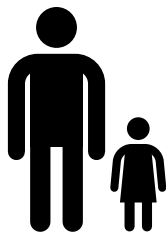
## UGANDA

Uganda is the largest refugee hosting country in Africa: it is home to 1,444,856 refugees, including over 1 million from South Sudan. 60% of the refugee population are children.



## SCHOOL

60% of the refugee population are children, over 350,000 of whom are out of school.



## GENDER GAP

There is a significant gender gap in enrolment, with fewer girls in school compared to boys.

## THE CHALLENGE

A needs assessment of children in refugee-hosting areas in Uganda conducted by War Child and the Norwegian Refugee Council:

- Very low levels of literacy across age groups, including visual literacy (interpretation of pictures, symbols, images).
- High expectations on the school environment and the teacher to be the sole source and location of knowledge and learning.
- Language, distance, overcrowded classrooms, poor or lack of facilities and materials, hunger, age differences (for overage children), and transition to the Ugandan curriculum form the main barriers to education according to the participants.





# The game world is their world...



## THEY CAN'T WAIT TO LEARN... NOW THEY DON'T HAVE TO

Can't Wait to Learn offers:



Maths and reading curriculum educative game and full instructional model based on Ministry of Education & Sports curricula and requirements



A digital user interface that is adapted to context to support motivation and active, self-paced learning



Diagnostics for every learner which can be aggregated according to Ministry and sector requirements



A delivery mechanism that works across resource-constrained environments

Above — Children learning math in Supiri

Can't Wait to Learn's unique co-creation process with targeted children culminates in the development of locally contextualised game content, including the design, characters, storyline and curriculum. Can't Wait to Learn offers a local interface that reflects children's reality, which lowers the threshold for children to engage, particularly if new to technology.

Above — Part of the Uganda Maths 1-3 gameworld, with in the top left a rural city

## ...AND THE WORLD THEY WANT TO SEE

We know that children are curious about the world outside their immediate context, and also that many of them have limited opportunity to learn about it. In Uganda, for example, the recognisable rural game world that children helped design, was also supplemented with an urban environment, which children can explore in the Uganda Maths 1-3 game. This was included because children expressed curiosity about urban environments during the needs assessment and co-creation activities, but had never visited urban settings.





“The mathematics has improved learner’s addition, subtraction, counting and application in real situation. Then in the Phonics, especially English aspects, it has improved reading. Some learners wish to have CWTL lessons throughout, which is not possible anyway!!! Honestly there is a lot these learners have gained through this tablet’s lessons. I see change in them. I see in the learners; their attendance has improved, abandonment has reduced, their language i.e spoken and written (spellings and sound) has improved.”— **Filbert, a CWTL Teacher in Mvepi Refugee settlement**



**Above** — Three of the reading game characters (l) Anna taking care of the animals. (m) Gameguide Simon and (r) Tibo getting water.  
**Left** — Childrens co-creation workshop

## CHALLENGING NORMS

During the needs assessment activities in Uganda, which included girls and boys equally, especially boys showed entrenched gender stereotypes, seeing the primary role of girls as working within the household, or ‘helping their mothers’. In contrast, girls showed interest in ‘typically male’ activities such as football. As a result, the game settings have been designed to take boys and girls out of their traditional gender roles, for example, showing girls playing football and female characters as doctors or boda boda (motorcycle taxi) drivers.

## REACHING ALL CHILDREN

The game world was designed to help address entrenched issues of stigma and discrimination by including characters with disabilities or albinism, for example daughter Anna in the game. Children with disabilities also participated in the consultation workshops in Uganda, and the contextualised Reading games have been designed to reflect these groups of children as far as possible.



# Replicating success: a scalable model

Can't Wait to Learn start up in Uganda builds on positive research results in Sudan, which show that Can't Wait to Learn has the potential to improve children's chances of reaching required reading competency levels at a rate 2.7 times faster than the Government Alternative Learning Program (ALP).

Thanks to significant testing and refinement of Can't Wait to Learn processes in Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan, in Uganda the total time from country entry to 'tablets in the hands of children' has been just nine months (August 2017 - May 2018). This timeframe includes game build, teacher and IT training workshops, game installation, roll-out preparation (community sensitization, storage facility installation, solar panel installation), and roll out. Game log data in Uganda to date shows that children are progressing well, and an evaluation is currently underway to measure learning outcomes. Initial observations show that teachers and facilitators – who play the games as part of training in order to grasp key concepts – are benefiting greatly, indicating that the approach can have a very positive impact on teacher's own understanding, and subsequently on quality of instruction.

## PARTNERSHIPS FOR SCALE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Partnerships are the cornerstone of the initiative's success, growth to date and scale-up ambitions. In Uganda, the Ministry of Education and Sports is actively engaged in needs assessment, curriculum revision for the game format, and teacher training processes. Implementing partners in Uganda – who to date include the Norwegian Refugee Council, Finn Church Aid and Save the Children – are chosen for their reach, technical skills, willingness to engage with research and ability to support scale-up.



A 2018 quasi-experimental study to evaluate the impact of the Can't Wait to Learn programme in Sudan compared to traditional out-of-school education on children's learning outcomes and psychosocial wellbeing found that for both Math and Literacy, children in Can't Wait to Learn and control groups improved between baseline and endline, however — **CWTL children improved significantly more.**

**Above** — Teacher and facilitator training Arua, group activity

**Left** — Teacher Charles explaining the game to the children in Surpiri



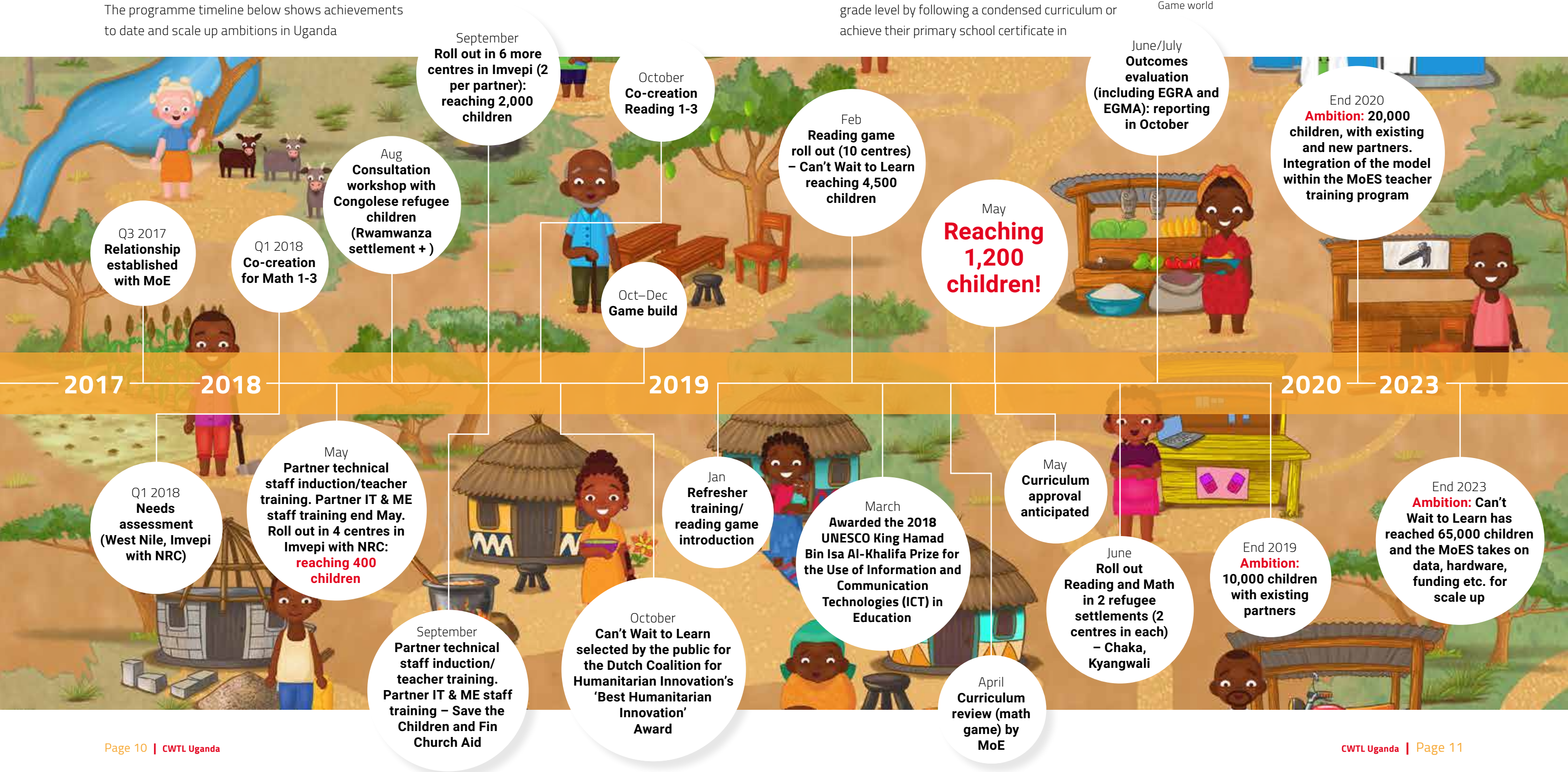
# Achievements and scale up ambitions

The programme timeline below shows achievements to date and scale up ambitions in Uganda

With the addition of Uganda as a programme country in 2017, Can't Wait to Learn added a new educational and implementing context: a refugee population from and hosted in a low resource setting, who have had limited or no access to education before being displaced. In Uganda, Can't Wait to Learn is designed to support children ages 10-14 'catch up' to their age grade level by following a condensed curriculum or achieve their primary school certificate in

3 years. It is being implemented as part of the Ministry of Education & Sports endorsed Accelerated Education Program for South Sudanese refugee and vulnerable Ugandan host community children.

Below — Part of the Uganda Reading Game world



## PARTNERSHIPS

Can't Wait to Learn is managed globally by War Child Holland. In Uganda, War Child works in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Finn Church Aid and Save the Children as implementing partners. The Ministry of Education and Sports – at national and District levels – has been involved at all programme stages, particularly with regards to supporting integration of Can't Wait to Learn into accelerated education programming (AEP).



**Left** — Lily the boda boda (taxi) driver from the Maths 1-3 game

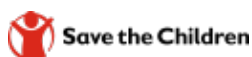
Can't Wait to Learn receives funding from key supporters and implements with partners:



Funded by  
European Union  
Civil Protection and  
Humanitarian Aid



Funded by the  
Cisco Foundation



## CONTACT

For more information, please contact us:

**Kate Radford**

Programme Director

[kate.radford@warchild.nl](mailto:kate.radford@warchild.nl)

**Laura Miller**

Deputy Programme Director

[Laura.miller@warchild.nl](mailto:Laura.miller@warchild.nl)

