

# AMPLIFYING VOICES OF YOUTH WITH MENTAL CHALLENGES IN UGANDA



## BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

### Teletherapy: A Contemporary Approach To Bridging The Mental Health Care Access Gap In Uganda

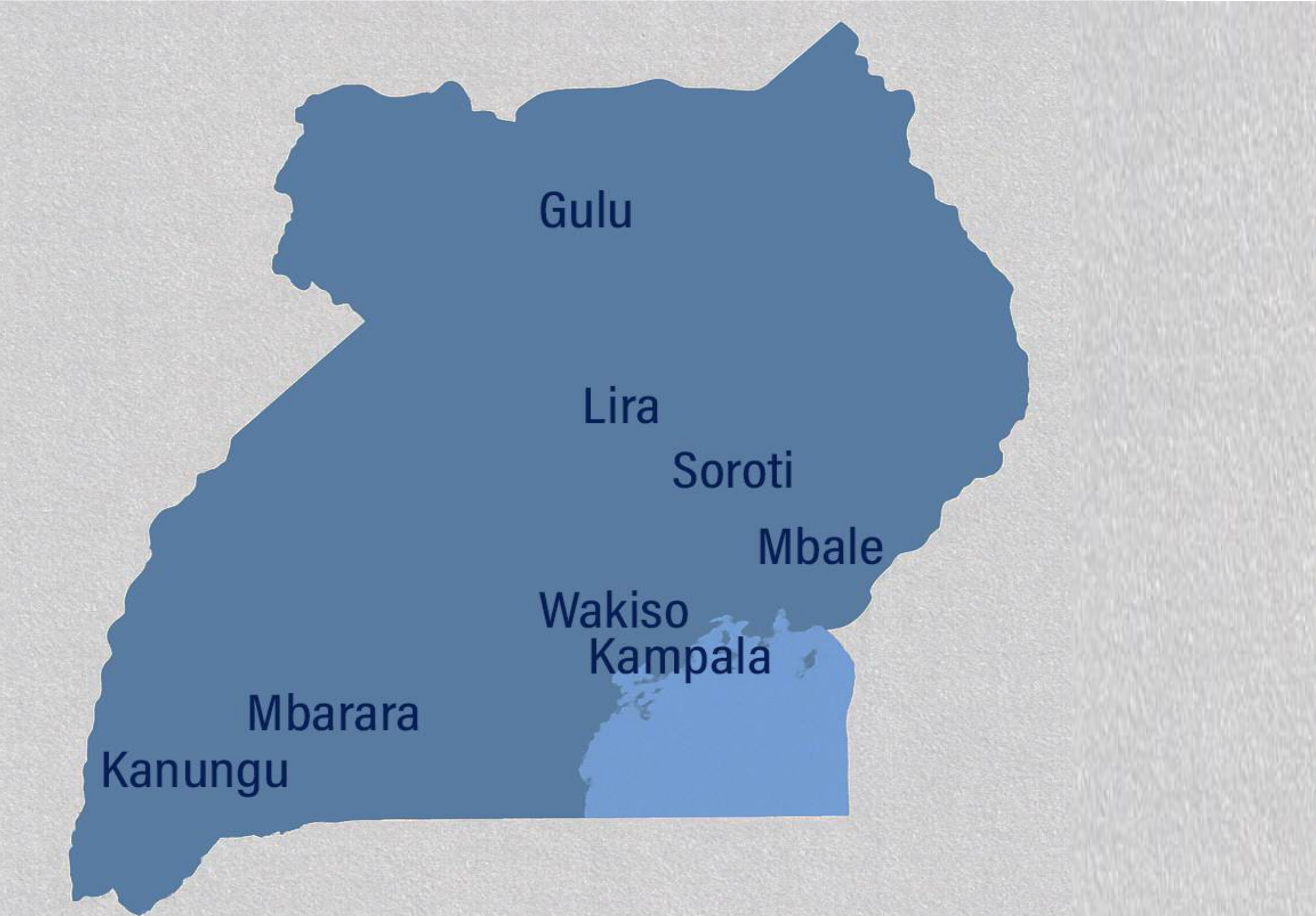
#### Background

Uganda faces a high burden of mental health issues, particularly among youth, yet access to mental health services remains limited due to geographical barriers, a lack of trained professionals, stigma, and cultural beliefs. To address this, Mental Health Uganda (MHU), in partnership with Mental Helse Ungdom (Norway), initiated a four-year project titled “Amplifying the Voices of Young People with Mental Health Issues in Uganda” (2020–2024), aiming to promote rights, rehabilitation, and accessible care through community-based approaches.

#### Introduction

Phase 1 of the project (2021–2024) implemented non-hospital-based mental health interventions, targeting 15,000 youth aged 15–35 in seven districts across Uganda. Core strategies included establishing a national toll-free mental health helpline (0800212121), delivering peer-led psychosocial support, and strengthening referral linkages to formal health services, bridging the care gap and promoting mental resilience in communities.

#### Geographic Scope



#### #ConversationsChangeLives



— Free Mental Health Support  
Call Toll free:  
**0800 21 21 21**  
Available Monday to Friday,  
8:30am–5:00pm

#### Aim, Objectives & Methods

##### Project Aim

Amplify youth voices and promote accessible, rights-based, and community-centered mental health services.

##### Objectives of the Presentation

- To share the performance and impact of the toll-free mental health helpline.
- To share lessons and actionable recommendations for strengthening mental health service delivery in Uganda.

##### Methods

- Design: Mixed-methods (Quantitative + Qualitative)
- Participants: Youth (15–35)
- Data: Service Data, Satisfaction Surveys, Interviews
- Analysis: Descriptive Stats + Thematic Analysis

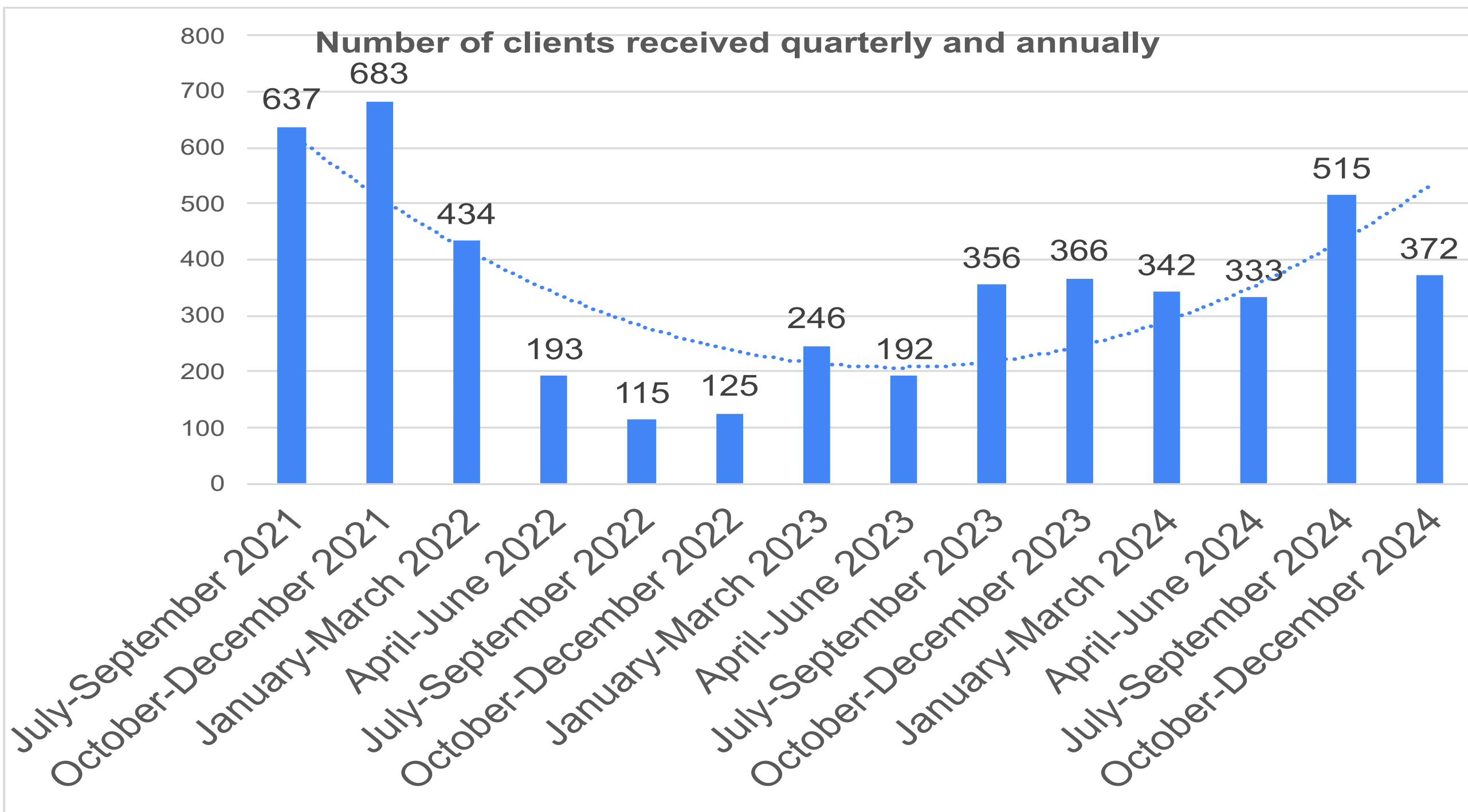
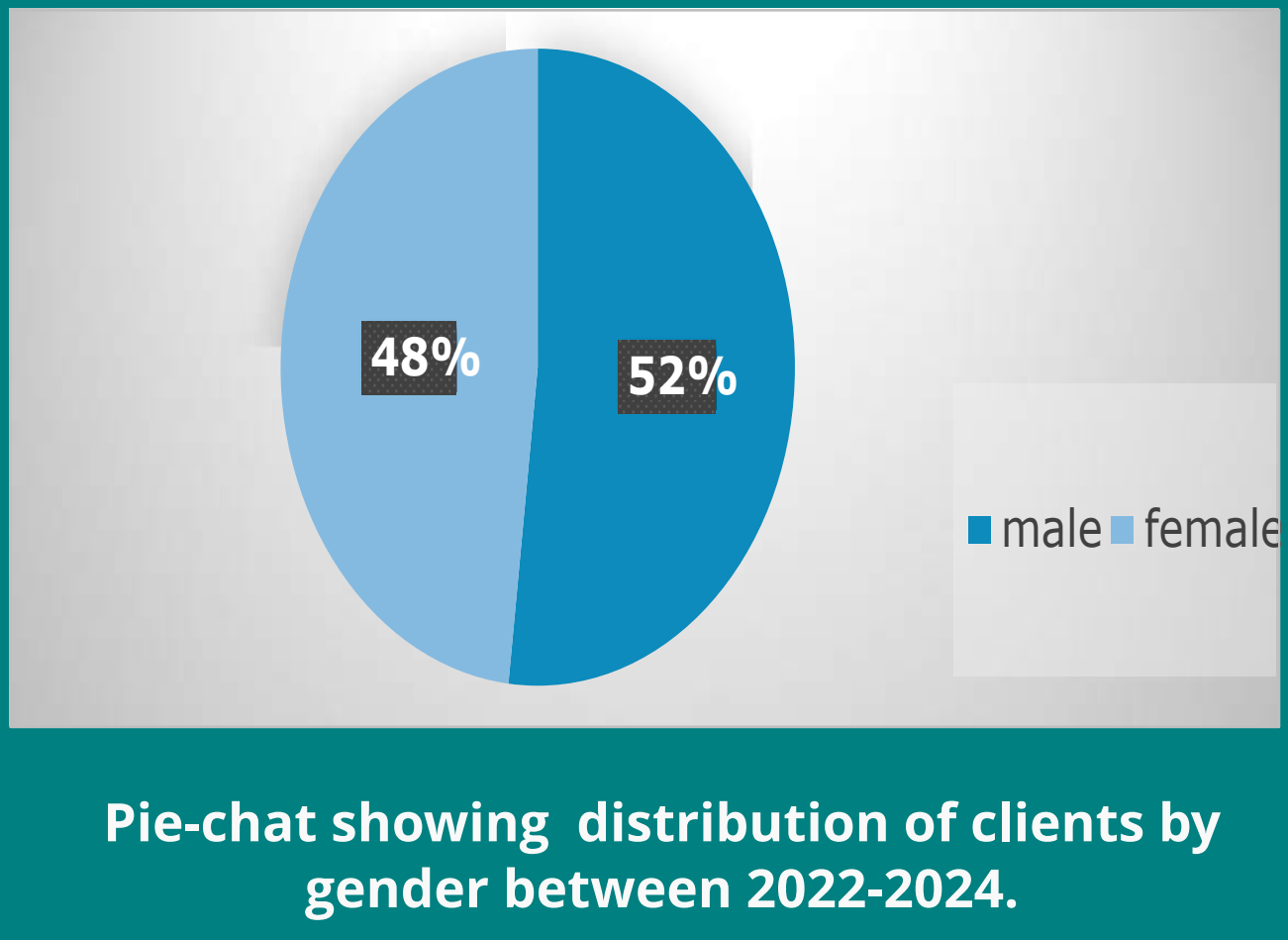
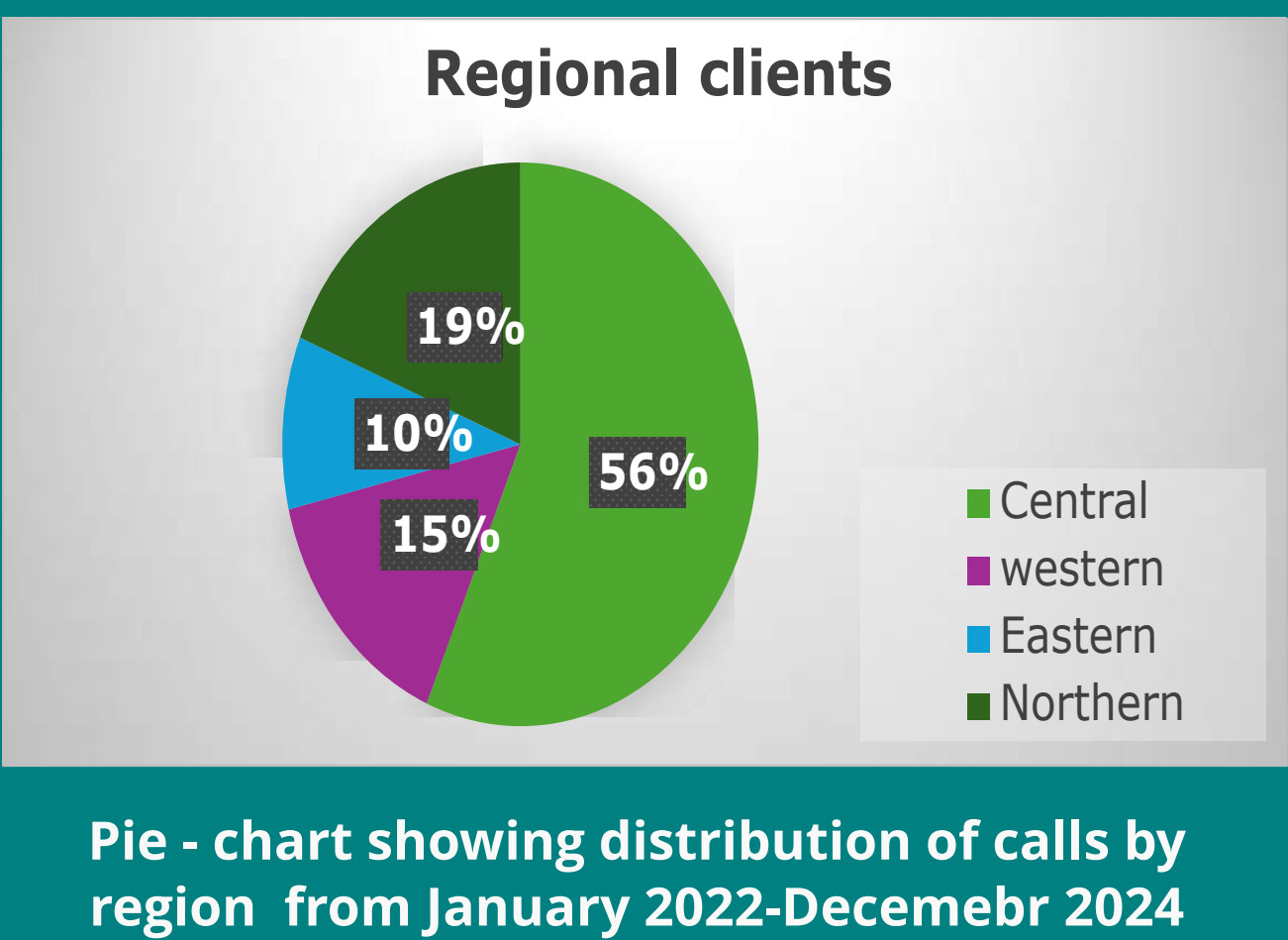
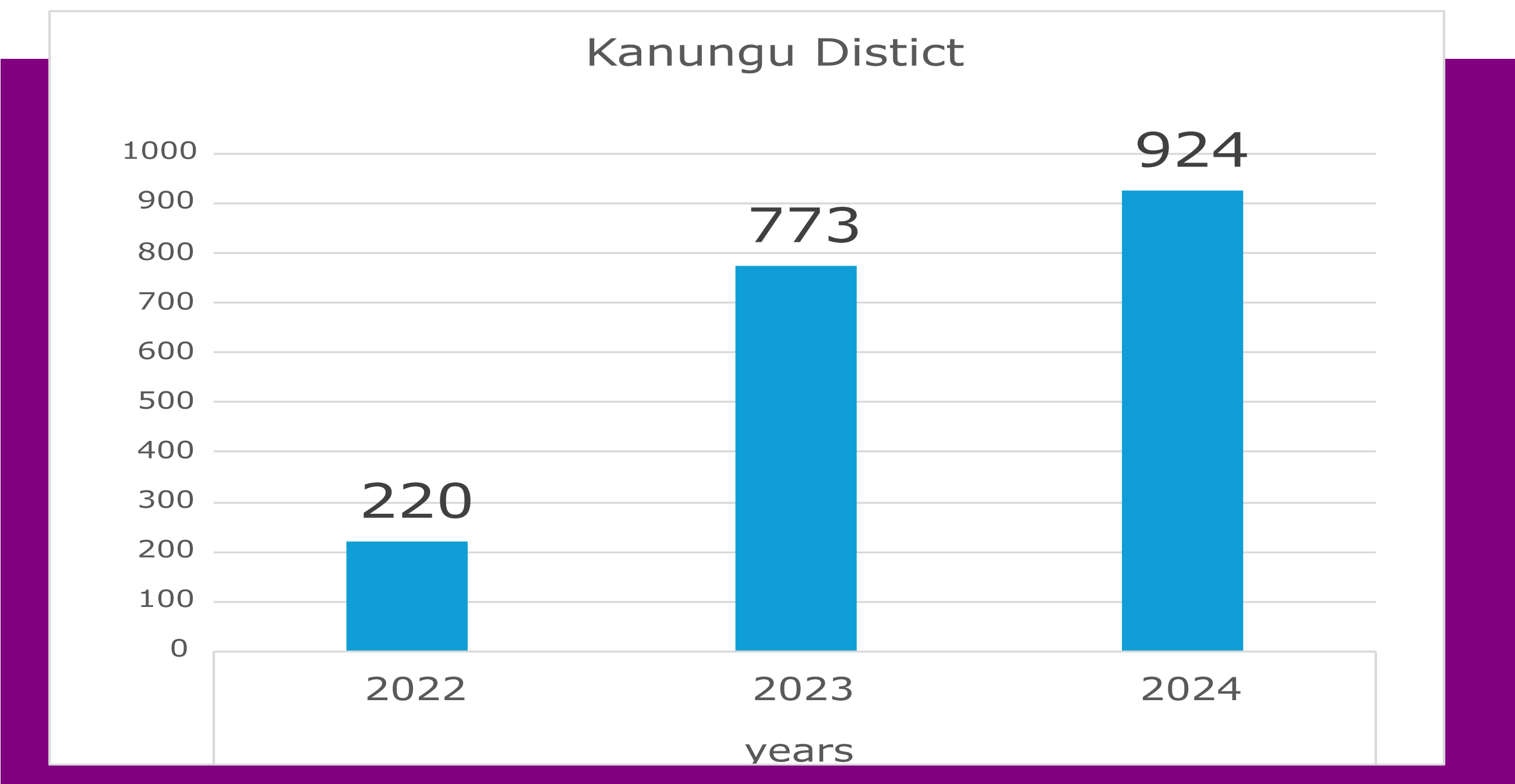
#### Results & Findings

**4,088** clients received counseling  
**6,806** sessions conducted

- 93%** satisfaction
- 80%** referral success
- 97%** found counselors polite
- 94%** felt heard and given enough time
- 70%** of callers aged 18–30
- 50%** were first-time help seekers

#### Kanungu peer support:

1,919clients (872 Male, 1,045 Female) from 8 sub-counties



#### Key Findings

- Teletherapy increased access among unreached youth
- Peer-led support is effective when well-structured
- Digital tools reduce stigma and enable early help-seeking

#### Lessons, Recommendations & Conclusion

##### Lessons & Best Practices

- Supervised peer-led support improves outcomes
- Follow-ups enhance referral success
- Community awareness increases usage
- Digital services reduce stigma

##### Recommendations

- Scale toll-free helpline nationwide
- Support peer models with training & airtime
- Integrate helpline into schools and youth programs
- Train media on responsible reporting
- Improve data management & feedback systems
- Institutionalize teletherapy in national health policy
- Promote public-private partnerships to sustain helpline

##### Conclusion

Teletherapy, supported by peer and referral systems, is a scalable, community-based model for mental health care in Uganda—especially for youth in underserved regions.