

STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE AND PROMOTING INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE PROGRAM (STRENPO)

Experiences of advocacy and action for climate change resilience



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Strengthening Resilience and Promoting Inclusive Governance for Women and Youth in Vulnerable Communities Project (STRENPO) is a partnership between CARE International in Uganda in partnership with Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE); Joint Effort to Save the Environment (JESSE); Environmental Alert (EA); and Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE-WN) funded by CARE Denmark with financial support from DANIDA.

The partnership also includes the support of: Ministry of Water and Environment, particularly the Forest Sector Support Department and National Forestry Authority; Environment-Climate Change Department, Wetlands Department; Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries; Office of the Prime Minister; Ministry of Gender, Labor & Social Development and Private Sector.

This project success is hinged on the cooperation and support of the District Local Governments of Kyegegwa, Kyenjojo and Arua. Special thanks go to the District Forest Officers, Natural Resources Officers, and Senior Environment Officers of these districts who have implemented activities tirelessly and exhibited high levels of professionalism. Special thanks for the Community Based trainers and Monitors who continue to be agents of change to community level to scale up the message of Resilience. Our target is “Resilient communities, Resilient Ecosystems”

I specifically thank the staff members at ACODE, JESSE, RICE West Nile and Environmental Alert who continue to research, innovate and engage citizens and duty bearers to ensure that STRENPO achieves its intended results. We have witnessed emergence of young people/ambassadors for climate change. Thanks to Friends of ZOKA, Walkers Association of Uganda, Green Peace Advocacy and Our teens we need answers. No words can express our gratitude to the youthful forces fighting for climate justice. Lastly, I thank the team at CARE International in Uganda who lead and or support implementation of the STRENPO. As we have always said Together Stronger for Climate Change.

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FOREWORD

Care International in Uganda presents to you experiences and lessons learnt while implementing Strengthening Resilience and Promoting Inclusive Governance for Women and Youth in Vulnerable Communities Project (STRENPO). At Care we are using the nexus of humanitarian and long-term development to build resilience that bridges humanitarian action and sustainable development. Our approach to increasing resilience operates in synergy with gender transformation and inclusive governance.

We support government of Uganda Comprehensive Refugee Framework (CRRF) that lists eight critical responses that they together with aid agencies are currently implementing to address the impact of refugees on the environment. Through the STRENPO project, we have focused on ensuring that women and youth in vulnerable, natural resource-dependent communities, including refugee settlements, are more resilient to shocks and stresses arising from natural resources degradation, climate change, and conflict or displacement.

In developing this document, we recognise the work done by our partners Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE); Joint Effort to Save the Environment (JESSE); Environmental Alert (EA); and Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE-WN). We have together witnessed these experiences while implementing this project. Therefore, this publication highlights key approaches that worked in STRENPO, it includes; achievements and challenges during project implementation and makes key recommendations for any civil society organizations to consider in implementing refugee community resilience initiatives.

We also show the models used to empower citizens such as engaging duty bearers, building civil society organizational capacity to engage with the duty bearers and claim citizens' rights and provide information to citizens, build organization legitimacy and support multi-stakeholder platforms for engagement and informing policy processes.

The team that put together this document comprised of staff of the Civil Society Organizations that are implementing STRENGPO programme. The team was convened in a four-day writers' workshop to document experiences and lessons learnt as a result of implementing the programme with support of independent facilitators, Solomon Kyeyune, Lydia Mirembe and James Kiyimba, who also managed the editorial, layout and design process. The details of Authors profiled at the back of this publication. I would like to sincerely thank; Sam Nyakoojo, Anna Amumpiire, Ephrance Nakiyingi, Robert Otim, Monica Anguparu, Jennifer Nangole, Samson Ongebo, Christopher Tusiime, Dr. Anthony Mugeere, and Aaron Kabagambe

I hope when you read this publication it inspires and enables you to learn about our work in strengthening resilience of refugees in Uganda



Delphine Pinault
Country Director

CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION REQUIRES GREATER COORDINATION OF ACTORS

By Ephrance Nakiyingi
Civil society and Networks Coordinator
Environmental Alert

CLIMATE change is a reality that we are already living with; it presents both global and local concerns. In Uganda, climate change presents a threat to the agricultural economy where over 80% of Uganda's population derive their livelihoods. The agricultural sector which is purely rain-fed contributes 37% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Currently, Uganda loses 200,000ha of forest cover annually (MWE SPR 2017) which interferes with the natural processes for the rain-fed agriculture. These trends call for serious action to mitigate the effects of climate change.

As such Uganda faces far-reaching impacts with economic, health and environmental implications. For instance, natural hazards like floods, prolonged droughts, heat waves, landslides are already visible in some parts of Uganda, reducing water quality, compromising human health and increasing vulnerability. Women, children and youth are most affected.

The fact that Climate change is a cross sectoral issue, therefore requires the attention and participation of various actors. Seemingly, the available efforts across the key sectors are uncoordinated especially when it comes to issues of climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience amongst the key stakeholders. Available CSO networks in the high impact sectors (Agriculture, Energy, Water and Environment) tend to work independently which further makes the available voices too weak to be heard by the responsible duty bearers.

Climate change resilience efforts by CSOs can be best coordinated through structured networks and multi-sector/multilevel platforms across the three high impact sectors in the country. This will not only enhance collaboration and coordination among the key stakeholders but also promote knowledge exchange through joint planning and implementation. Better coordination will also generate the required critical masses and provide amplified voices that influence change.

Environmental Alert (EA) hosts four networks across three sectors including Environment and Natural Resources (ENR), agriculture as well as the energy sector. Through these networks, Environmental Alert has facilitated the environment and natural resources civil society networks (ENR-CSOs) and Uganda Forest working group to meaningfully participate and contribute to the sectors plans and agendas during the Joint sector reviews. During financial year (FY) 2017/2018 through the Joint Sector Review (JSR), these networks made recommendations to government which were adopted to guide the Ministry of Water and Environment's (MWE) undertakings for the year 2018/2019. These recommendations directly reflect key advances towards climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience. Five recommendations were adopted and these include:-

- I. Operationalizing the Climate Change mainstreaming indicators by the end of FY2018/19.
- II. Facilitating a policy shift that promotes energy efficiency and alternatives to charcoal as a form of energy by the end

FY2018/2019.

III. Developing a water and environment sector Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and implementation roadmap for refugee hosting micro-catchments by end of FY2018/2019.

IV. Developing a water and environment sector Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and implementation roadmap for refugee hosting micro-catchments by end of FY2018/2019.

V. Developing indicators for ENR mainstreaming for all sectors in order to achieve reduced contributions to degradation by the end of FY 2018/19.

Environmental Alert has also contributed to the growth in membership of the networks that she hosts. Currently over 120 CSOs throughout the country have been mobilised under the four main networks, to participate and expand their negotiation spaces at both national and district levels. This has culminated into more debate about climate action at national and local levels, cross learnings amongst the key stakeholders; an amplified climate action voice, demand for accountability and commitments from the duty bearers.

A key outcome at national level is the establishment of a parliamentary committee on climate change; while at district level, there is a strong commitment to pass environmental ordinances in Kyegegwa and Arua districts.

Further still, EA has facilitated the formation of structured partnerships with the key duty bearers specifically with the MWE and other CSO networks i.e the Climate action Network and Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) by signing Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs). The aim of these MoUs is to build synergies and pool resources that support implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives aimed at strengthening community resilience for youth and women.

These collaborative initiatives have birthed joint programs that promote climate resilience and cross learning among the actors. A case in point is the inclusive green growth project which is jointly implemented by the ENR-CSO Network and the Ministry of water and environment

Much as the above has been achieved, multi-sectoral linkages/networks are faced with structural, governance and administrative challenges. This affects their effective operations especially when their activities are solely reliant on donor aid yet tackling climate change requires long term interventions.

As a lesson from the interventions across the three networks, it is important to utilize other partners' strengths especially during advocacy for climate resilience. In a nutshell, Civil Society networks can effectively advance structured change towards building resilient communities if only they are well organised and coordinated at different levels from National to district level.

WALK FOR CLIMATE CHANGE: THE NEW APPROACH TO ADVOCACY



By Christopher Tusiime
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CLIMATE change poses serious threats to socio-economic development, biodiversity and ecosystems. According to the Economic Assessment of the Impacts of Climate Change 2015, climate change damage estimates in the agriculture, water, infrastructure and energy sectors will collectively amount to 2-4% of the GDP between 2010 and 2050. It is estimated that if no adaptive action is taken, annual costs could be in the range of US\$3.2 - 5.9 billion within a decade, with the biggest impacts being on water, followed by energy, agriculture, and infrastructure.

The country has started experiencing the severe effects of climate change like floods, prolonged dry seasons, unreliable rains. Poor communities, households and individuals with least resources have the least capacity to adapt to the changes and are therefore the most vulnerable particularly women and girls. To address key climate change issues, there is a need to mobilise the critical stakeholders required to create awareness on climate change causes and impacts and to influence the desired change. Most importantly, there is need to go beyond the usual mobilization strategies.

In that regard, CARE mobilizes civil society organizations and

grassroots communities to seek changes in policy and practice. By raising the voices of the people most affected by climate change, CARE helps to raise awareness and create debate about environmental sustainability.

Since 2018, CARE and Walkers Association of Uganda adopted walking as a mechanism to increase awareness about the dangers of Climate Change. The “Climate Change Walks” as they are called, involve mobilisation of different members of the public to trek long distances in selected parts of the country. During the walks, which may last up to two or three weeks, participants sensitise communities about climate change, its effects and call for action from different actors. They also engage in community dialogues, tree-planting, and public education about climate change.

These walks have provided a platform for the committed activists to meaningfully engage with decision-makers urging them to commit to serious action and help communities build resilience and adapt to climate change. Along the way, the walkers engage Local Government leaders, the Religious Leaders, the head teachers of schools and the local communities. At the stopovers the activists speak to the communities in local languages about the dangers of climate change and its impacts and how best the community can mitigate the effects. All this provides a wider audience for the advocacy messages and addresses the knowledge gap about climate change.

Among the key partners is the Ministry of Water and Environment which has adopted the strategy to promote some of their annual events like the Uganda Water and Environment Week. The ministry has declared the Walk to Kapchorwa as an annual event of creating awareness about climate change amongst communities.

The youth have also been pivotal in this cause based on their numbers and motivated by the need to secure a bright future that enables them to enjoy a state of environment that is free from degradation and climate change impacts. The youth are easy to mobilize but also they are a great asset in the advocacy given their passion for technology and social media which is now the new trend of sharing information. The 2019 walk to save Zoka was joined by Youths from Makerere University, Gulu, Nakasongola and Adjumani Districts. During the walk they participated in activities like tree planting and awareness creation among communities.

The walks have also attracted the media document the voices of the most vulnerable groups like the women and youths who are most affected by the poor governance of natural resources as well as impacts of climate change.

Such coverage compelled the concerned ministries, authorities, and departments such as National Forestry Authority, Ministry of Water and Environment and the Climate Change Department to make commitments regarding climate change and natural resource degradation. Such commitments included; National Forestry Authority agreeing to implement collaborative Forestry management in Zoka for the community to feel the benefit of the Central Forest Reserve but also take part in management, the commissioner of Wetlands in MWE committed to support school afforestation programmes for four schools namely; Biyaya S.S, Adjumani Model S.S, Zoka Primary School and Nile Spring Junior School through supply of seedlings and provision of technical support. The climate change department agreed to popularize the climate change policy 2015 amongst the local governments.

The walks have led to increased visibility and prominence of

youth focused pressure groups such as Friends of Zoka, Our Tree We Need Answers and individual activists who have developed a passion to address climate change and its effects. The European Union awarded William Amanzuru of the Friends of Zoka pressure group the human rights defenders award for 2019. William was awarded for the consistency in raising issues of abuse, misuse and poor governance of forest resources particularly Zoka the only natural rainforest in Adjumani District in North West.

Through the walk for climate change campaigns CARE has managed to build capacity and provide leadership to local initiatives to tackle climate change and holding duty bearers accountable to commitments made under the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. During one of the walks dubbed walk to Zoka the community in Atiak and Pakelle didn't only join the walk but also provided support to the walkers in form of providing accommodation and meals.

It is therefore important for civil society actors to creatively handle the climate change advocacy in order to mobilize the critical masses and cause the necessary action. It was evident during the walks that the community is ready to join such movements to address their concerns.

Key lessons learnt

- Conducting advocacy campaigns by involving different stakeholders from the private sector to communities directly affected by climate change, enhances campaign uptake at different levels.
- Conducting action-based advocacy through demonstrating climate change mitigation approaches and strategies with the involvement of leaders enhances community uptake and participation in combating climate change.
- Action-oriented advocacy with the involvement of different stakeholders/players is an effective way to attract masses and media attention.

If climate can change, why can't we?



Geoffrey Ayeni and Dr.Mafabi during the flag off of the Walk to save Zoka Campaign, March 2019

INFLUENCING CLIMATE CHANGE DEBATE IN THE TENTH PARLIAMENT



Anthony Mugeere, Research Fellow at ACODE and Onesmus Mugenyi, Deputy Executive Director, ACODE.

JOHN Otim (not real name) is one of the most vocal and renowned members of Uganda's 10th Parliament; an independent and flamboyant legislator who lives by the nickname 'honourable smart.' He is also a good orator and local philanthropist whose rise to fame and power in his constituency was bolstered by his sponsorship of a local football club and that largely explains why he easily trounced five other contestants for the highly coveted parliamentary seat. He is also popular with the media—especially television reporters who always sound him out for sound-bites on every topical issue that is tabled on the floor of the August House.

As an independent legislator, Otim did not need the blessing of any political party Chief Whip to enroll for membership of any of the House's standing committees. He only relied on his wit and followed his heart to sign up for the Committee on Natural Resources. "Nature is like women; you either love it or you don't. That's why I signed up to this committee," he joked, as he put his pen in the bottom pocket of his oversized jacket.

Like Otim, many legislators cannot fully appreciate the impact of climate change on humanity and natural systems. Although

they are fully aware of their role in passing laws and overseeing government expenditure, they fail to explain why the rainfall amounts are dwindling in their constituencies; or why the weather conditions are becoming hotter and drier every other year. Some of them are yet to realize that lakes and rivers are slowly drying up too creating a water crisis for industrial and domestic use in some areas.

Whereas reports of destructive storms, landslides and plunging water supplies in different parts of the country are common in the media, very few legislators are concerned that these calamities are a threat to food security and the key economic pillars of the economy such as tourism and fishing.

In a bid to ameliorate the impact of climate change, the country has developed a series of climate change policy frameworks, plans and programs. Specifically, these are aimed to create resilience of the ecosystems, communities, cities and the entire economy to climate shocks.

"One of the key approaches by government in dealing with the climate change challenge is through the implementation of the climate change policy which provides guidance and directions in addressing the problem while enabling the country to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change," said Ms Flavia Byekwaso, a senior climate change officer, Ministry of Water and Environment, during a presentation at the national climate

resilience conference held in Kampala on August 1st, 2019.

Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) is one of the partners complementing government efforts to enhance political oversight in designing and implementing climate change policy frameworks and climate resilience strategies at both the central and local government levels. With funding support from CARE International in Uganda, ACODE has—since July 2018—been implementing the Strengthening Resilience and Promoting Inclusive Governance for Women and Youth in vulnerable communities (STRENPO) project which was—among other things—designed to champion advocacy to enhance political oversight on the implementation of policy and legal frameworks on climate change.

“This four-year project involves designing and implementing policies, laws and practices that promote resilience and enhance resilience of communities, women and youth to climate change shocks. It is basically about increasing the capacity of selected local governments, civil society organisations and vulnerable groups to become resilient to climate change,” said Dr. Arthur Bainomugisha, the Executive Director, ACODE.

Since the project inception, ACODE has worked with the Parliamentary Forum on Climate Change (PFCC-U) and other civil society to influence the establishment of the committee on climate change. Through collaboration with other like-minded CSOs, ACODE brought to the fore the need to establish a specialized forum which had hitherto been a mere proposal by some stakeholders. In October 2018, ACODE prepared and submitted a memorandum to Parliament giving rationale and justification on the establishment of the committee. Prior to this, ACODE had also organized strategic and round table meetings with legislators and other stakeholders to discuss a range of issues on climate change in Uganda.

ACODE also prepared media articles on topical issues concerning building resilience of women and youth and their participation in natural resource governance. On November 14th 2018, a team of ACODE project staff appeared before the Committee on Rules, Privileges and Discipline, Parliament of Uganda and made a submission on the rationale and justification of establishing the committee. In May 2019, the committee was approved by Parliament and officially launched on August 14,th 2019. Although it would be unrealistic to claim that ACODE’s interventions were fully responsible for the creation of this committee, a key lesson to learn from this process is that strategic partnerships are vital in influencing policy at both national and local governance levels.

“We recognize the role of ACODE in working with other stakeholders to present a case for the formation of this committee. Considering the climate change challenges, we feel that this committee will play a critical role in providing policy guidance to

government and monitor its programmes,” remarked Lawrence Biyika Songa, chairperson of the PFCC-U while chairing the first session of the national dialogue on climate change in Kampala on August 1st, 2019.

Largely charged with overseeing and defending budgets on climate change financing in Uganda, the committee will also track climate change financing from the central to the district local governments and gather evidence on the sustainable utilization of the funds. The Committee will also oversee not only the work of the Climate Change Department (CCD) and the Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA) and oversee the implementation of government-led projects and programs on climate change such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and Inclusive Green Growth for Poverty Reduction (IGGPR).

ACODE’s influence on climate change policy making in Uganda’s 10th parliament has not only been limited to the creation of the PFCC-U. It has also been recognized as a success through the numerous engagements by the Think Tank to organize two national engagements to discuss major policy issues on climate resilience in Uganda. Organized in October 2018 and July 2019 respectively, the engagements stirred debate in Parliament, government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and the media on the different approaches to ameliorate climate change and enhance climate resilience in the country.

This was further enhanced by the proceedings of the half-day national dialogue organized in partnership with the Ministry of Water and Environment on August 1st, 2019 to discuss the enhancement of climate resilience in key sectors of the economy such as agriculture and water.

“This dialogue has enhanced ACODE’s reputation as a key actor in climate resilience policy work in Uganda. As legislators, we are ready to interface with you during consultations on the climate change bill which is expected to be tabled on the floor of parliament before the end of the year,” said Andrew Kaluya Kiiza, vice chairperson of the Natural Resources Committee, while delivering his closing remarks to the national dialogue.

Apart from contributing to the forthcoming debate on the climate change bill in Parliament later this year, ACODE also intends to influence the agenda of the PFCC-U by writing memos and petitions to the Forum on the urgent issues on climate resilience in Uganda. While ACODE has achieved a host of other success stories through STENPO, that of influencing climate change debate in Uganda’s parliament is not only of utmost national importance but also one of the ways in which legislators like John Otim (‘honourable smart’) can truly live up to their expectations of passing laws and overseeing government expenditure.

SUPPORTING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO APPRECIATE CLIMATE CHANGE



Climate Change Department official making a presentation on Uganda's National Policy Framework for Building Climate Resilience

**By Anna Amumpiire,
ACODE**

District Local Governments have started integrating climate change resilience in their development plans and programmes, thanks to capacity building efforts by ACODE and partners under the Strengthening Resilience and Promoting Inclusive Governance Program (STRENPO). District technical officers have also demonstrated greater appreciation of key issues around climate change policy and practice. Particularly in Kyenjojo and Kyegegwa the District Natural Resource Officers (DNRO) can now speak confidently and impart knowledge about climate change resilience.

Uganda has adopted a National Climate Change Policy which articulates the need to mainstream climate change in different sectors and district development plans. However, implementation has been slow because of limited capacity of key actors to implement the policy. Local governments as well as CSOs, CBOs and citizens' groups lack the capacity to execute these functions and to hold duty bearers accountable.

In 2018, Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) undertook to engage various stakeholders and enhance their capacity to build climate change resilience and to engage policy makers on natural resources governance. Under the STRENPO Project, ACODE organized three capacity building workshops on mainstreaming climate change, gender,

women and youth in the district development plans, policies and programmes starting with Arua, Kyenjojo and Kyegegwa districts.

The workshops targeted a wide range of district stakeholders such as District Speakers, Councilors, sub county chiefs, the District Planner, District Natural Resources Officer, District Environment Officer, District Agricultural Officer and Community Development Officer, CSOs, CBOs, citizen groups, media and private sector.

Technical officers from: National Planning Authority, Climate Change Department, Makerere University and civil society facilitated the workshops.

“We need to work together in addressing climate change efforts. The negative effects of climate change will not segregate, they will affect everyone. I thank the organisers for organising this training which will inform the district stakeholders to cope with climate change effects...As a district we are committed to ensuring that climate resilience strategies are integrated for example during construction projects,” Vice Chairperson, Kyenjojo District Local Government said at the training.

The Kyegegwa District Natural Resources officer (DNRO) having realised her role as climate change focal point at district level is now able to pass on information and knowledge on climate change at different district fora. The DNRO was not aware that she was the district climate change focal person as

stipulated in the Climate Change Policy; at an ACODE workshop in Kyegegwa (convened on 30th October 2018) she was informed of this role.

“I was not aware that the district natural resource officer is the climate change focal point for the district. I am being informed of this in this workshop,” DNRO Kyegegwa said at the training.

In 2019, JESE/CARE organised training for youth in Kyegegwa to understand their roles and responsibilities in enhancing climate resilience and environmental protection. The DNRO was among the key speakers at the training. The DNRO affirmed that the natural resources department had set aside funds to undertake the process of developing an ordinance on environmental protection especially for conservation of wetlands in the district. Further more Kyegegwa launched a demarcation exercise of all wetlands in Kyaka Refugee settlement camp in order to restore the already degraded swamps by the refugees.

Since the capacity building workshops, Kyegegwa district has drafted a state of the environment report which has updated data on environmental and natural

resources (ENR) in the district. The report also contains information on climate resilience strategies in the district. The Kyegegwa District Environment Officer noted that the district local government would ensure that their development plans integrate climate resilience approaches and strategies.

At a national dialogue on climate resilience the Kyenjojo District Planner made a presentation on Kyenjojo district’s experience in mainstreaming climate change in the district development plan, policies and programmes. From his presentation, the district appreciates the importance of building climate resilience and integrating women and youth in climate adaptation and mitigation interventions in the governance of natural assets.

While Capacity building is an ongoing process, there is evidence that ACODE in collaboration with STRENPO partners have enhanced the capacity of technical staff and other stakeholders in Kyenjojo, Kyegegwa and Arua. They are now able to appreciate climate change, climate resilience and inclusion of women and youth in natural resources governance. Furthermore, these districts are beginning to prioritise these issues in the district planning processes.

Achievements from the capacity building workshops

- Understanding of climate change and its impacts to livelihoods and development (national & local)
- Understanding of the concepts of “climate resilience,” “adaptation & mitigation” “gender equity & diversity,” “gender mainstreaming,” and “women and youth inclusion” and how they apply/should apply in their daily work
- Understanding Uganda’s national legal and policy framework for building resilience to impacts of climate change and natural resource governance and the obligations it engenders on district and lower local governments
- Understanding how to integrate women and youth in climate adaptation and mitigation interventions and in the governance of natural assets
- Understanding and acquiring skills and tools on how to integrate climate change and gender in the district development plans, programmes and practices
- Understanding gender responsive budgeting and its importance as a tool for promoting gender equity, accountability and transparency in budget processes

REFUGEE WOMEN IN SAVINGS DRIVE TO IMPROVE THEIR LIVELIHOODS



JESE staff and CBT have mentored savings groups in records keeping and financial management

By Kabagambe Aaron Augustine
M&E Officer-
Joint Efforts to Save Environment (JESE)

KYAKA II Settlement in Uganda is host to 100,000 refugees, occupying 81.5 square kilometers. The refugees have no access to formal financial services like credit from commercial Banks or micro finance Institutions. They are pressed for basic needs like food, clothing and shelter. They largely depend on humanitarian support. With limited land for production, it is not possible for them to engage in income generating activities and cash aid remains inadequate.

To address their economic and livelihood hardships, refugee women in Kyaka came together and formed Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) which have now spread throughout the settlement. However, the savings groups were stagnating and failing to benefit members because of limited capacity in financial management. Members and leaders could not ably keep clear records of transactions, nor calculate loans or interests. This always led to conflicts among members and affected their participation.

To enhance economic empowerment, JESE has supported 58 VSLAs in Kyaka II to enhance their financial management capacities. JESE offered trainings in VSLA methodologies, financial literacy, conducting action audits, provision of VSLA start up kits comprised of saving boxes, stationery and member pass books, and recruited community-based facilitators to continuously back up their technical needs and provide mentoring of the chairperson, secretary and treasurer. A total of 1270 members have benefited from JESE's intervention. By

end of July 2019 they had saved and loaned 92 million and 123.5 million respectively. In supporting the VSLA, JESE saw an opportunity to ease pressure on natural resources. Desperate to find the necessities of a basic life, refugees would quickly cut down forests for construction of houses, firewood and lighting. They would also encroach on wetlands to grow food for household consumption.

Rebecca Miviane is one such refugee who came from Democratic Republic of Congo. She is a resident of Kakoni Village in Byabakoola zone, Kyaka II settlement and married with five children, with limited support from her husband. She lives in a 30m x 30m plot of land allocated to them by UNHCR.

As a new arrival in the refugee settlement of Kyaka II in 2014, with support from UNHCR, Rebecca's family was given a tarpaulin for roofing, two jerrycans, two saucepans and a 30watts solar power for lighting in their house. Unfortunately, Rebecca's husband sold all the accessories of the solar power in exchange for alcohol in the bar which rendered the panel useless for a long time. Rebecca therefore used fuel wood for both cooking and lighting in her house. In her first four years in Kyaka II, her family fed poorly and depended on food rations received from World Food Programme (WFP). The income she earned from selling labour to the host community was often grabbed by the husband to spend in the bar.

In December 2018, Rebecca joined one of these VSLA groups named Wamama Simameni composed of 28 refugee women. She started with 6000 shillings weekly and gradually raised her share values to Ugx 180,000. She then took a loan from the group worth UGXshs230, 000. She bought a pig at Ugx 180,000 and used the remainder to acquire household utensils.

With time, Rebecca's piggery project has multiplied as the sow continues to deliver piglets, giving her a reliable source of income. She continues to pay back the loan with cash aid savings.

In one of the meetings organised by JESE, Rebecca and her husband learnt that with proper savings, her family's livelihood could be improved and she could be able to meet her needs. With the loan from the VSLA, Rebecca also bought a bulb for lighting in her house and a phone charging system which she uses on the solar panel donated to by UNHCR. She was then able to put up a small phone charging business which brings in a minimum of Ugx 2000 Shillings daily, and thus complementing on her piggery project.

With cash from the two businesses, Rebecca can buy nutritious food for her family to supplement the aid received from WFP. UNHCR allocated her an additional 90watts solar panel to support the family business. She put up a Barber's salon, attracting a wide range of customers from the community. The business earns her; Ugx 6,000 to Ugx 9,000 per day. With the salon business, Rebecca's husband is busy all day and doesn't go to the bar any more. All income made from the salon is brought in the same pool in which collections from cash aid, earnings from phone charging and other projects. The couple plan for their finances before spending.

Rebecca and family are optimistic about their future. From the VSLA, she anticipates a share out value of about Ugx 460,000 at

the end of the cycle and an added income from the sale of six piglets at Ugx 70,000 average price. "I now plan to rent another piece of land for crop production from the neighbouring host community to continue supporting her family with food and income. The salon business will generate funds to buy a generator so that a branch is opened in the nearest trading centre to reach more customers," says Rebecca.

"Because of the great benefits attained in working with JESE and CARE, I chose to brand my mats and carpets and baskets with the names of the organisations as a sign of appreciation," she adds.

The Ugx230,000 loan from Wamama Simameni group formed a foundation Rebecca's current livelihood Other women have learnt from her and are now joining the saving groups.

Apart from improving livelihoods, JESE's intervention has eased pressure on natural resources in the settlement. The intervention has strengthened resilience and continues to promote inclusive governance of natural resources with focus on wetlands and forests within and around refugee community. Through support to the VSLAs, JESE worked with refugees to identify the possible strategies to manage the natural resources and prioritise economic empowerment and expansion of income base. Tree planting, kitchen gardening were the key activities which promoted restoration of degraded environment. With kitchen gardens, households like Rebecca's can produce food that was habitually grown in wetlands.



Rebecca Miviane attends to her prized possession- the pig that has become an income earner for the family

THE NEED FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS TO TAKE UP ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES



A field visit in Kisote Small scale irrigation farm, Tororo district during the Joint Technical Review (JTR) meeting. This was an opportunity for CSOs to review a government project and provide feedback aimed at improving the irrigation scheme. (photo by Kamoga Arafa Environmental Alert)

By Andrew Tebandeke
Environmental Alert

Given all the myths, misconceptions and misinformation surrounding climate change, it is important for all actors, to prepare themselves in the best way possible, to engage each other on the key issues. It is also important to identify and familiarize with the available spaces where actors can engage on the climate change agenda.

CSOs need to adjust advocacy strategies and maximize available engagement spaces in order to influence policy and practice around climate change. The challenge is that many CSOs lack adequate skills and lobby tactics to reap from the engagement spaces they have with government.

At national level the available spaces for engagement include: The Annual Joint sector Reviews, Joint technical Review, Sector Working Groups, and Parliamentary Forum on Climate Change, Parliamentary committee on Natural Resources, and Parliamentary Committee on Climate Change, Parliamentary Committee Agricultural and Parliamentary Committee Natural Resources. Relatedly at district level, spaces including; district council meetings, district integrity promotional forums and inter-district multi-stakeholder forums.

One of the key objectives of the STRENPO project is to ensure that CSOs and networks have capacity to engage duty bearers especially regarding citizens' resilience to climate change effects. Under the STRENPO Project, Environmental Alert has been building CSO capacity using the mentoring approach. Before any engagement between CSO representatives and government, a pre-mentoring session is held. In this session participants are given tips and skills on how to engage the government. They are taught tactics of how to present issues. They develop an engagement strategy which they apply when they have an opportunity to interact with the government officials and duty bearers. This approach has boosted participation of CSOs in engagement with government.

A case in point is during the 2018 Water and Environment Joint

Sector Review (JSR). Among the recommendation that were submitted to the Ministry of Water and Environment through the ENR-CSO position paper, five recommendations were adopted as undertakings for the year 2018/2019. This success is attributed to the presentation format that was enhanced by the pre-mentorship sessions. "This new approach will yield great achievement in advancing climate change resilience interventions," said one of the ENR-CSO member after that success. This also indicates that government is appreciating CSOs contribution to the ENR sector.

Another case was the pre-coaching session for ENR-CSO members that happened before the Joint Technical Review (JTR) of Ministry of Water and Environment. The JTR is a space where government reviews its progress towards undertaking commitments in a particular sector. It's an opportunity for the ministry to re-strategize in order to achieve its commitments. It's also an opportunity for other sector players to ask government questions that will help it assess its self and come up with better strategies to achieve its commitments.

Representatives from the ENR-CSO network had to be equipped well to utilize this space effectively. Eight members of the network who were to represent were mentored and given skills and tactics to maximally utilize the space. During the actual JTR, members took up roles of secretaries in smaller review groups which was a very good opportunity for them to present their ideas, many participated in group discussions and ensured that their ideas were taken up and during the plenary sessions members backed up each other in a conversing manner to ensure that their contributions are taken up by the duty bearers.

One of the CSO member representative said: " if it was not for the pre-mentorship session, I would attend the JTR like a tourist, but with the skills that were given to me, my contributions were well documented and taken up by the ministry."

Environmental Alert recommends this approach to be adopted across board to ensure that engagement spaces are well utilized.

USING WASTE TO IMPROVE REFUGEE YOUTH LIVELIHOODS AND RESILIENCE



Youth collecting plastic waste from land field of a fellow refugee in Rhino Camp refugee settlement

By Liberia Munduru
Coordinator, RICE-WN Arua Branch

THE influx of refugees in Rhino Camp has increased pressure on natural resources. The unabated degradation of soils, water, tree cover leading to high temperatures, low water table, drought, irregular rainfall patterns, low crop yields, heavy winds that cause intense destruction to the temporary houses and food crops owned by the refugees and host communities. Meanwhile, the refugee youth are increasingly becoming idle and engaged in anti-social acts such as drug abuse (addiction to satchet waragi, mairungi and reckless sexual activity) due to failure to find productive engagements that can keep them busy and improve their livelihoods.

More than anything, waste management is still a big challenge in Rhino Camp. Plastic waste is of particular concern because because many consumable products are packed in plastics and yet the disposal is not being managed well. Much of this waste comes from the packages of Sacket waragi a local brew that is highly alcoholic and toxic, packing bags and bottles, food raps, broken chairs, utensils among others. In June 2019, in a clean up exercise, 22 sacks of plastics were collected in an hour by 30 youth in Ocea refugee settlement- and there was more to be collected.

The growth of plastic production during the past 70 years has outpaced that of any other manufactured material. This is because it's cheap and affordable to everybody in the community. New plastic is even cheaper than recycled plastic in the region. The used plastic is littered in gardens, water points (River Nile is about 15kms from the refugee settlement), homesteads and waste collection points thus affecting crop yields, free flow of water and dirty environments among others.

Under the campaign SLOGAN "resilient livelihoods, resilient

ecosystems" Strengthening Resilience and Promoting Inclusive Governance Program (STRENPO) in partnership with Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE WN are working with the youth in the refugee settlement, to undertake a pilot initiative of plastic waste recycling as a way of contributing to waste management practices, creating entrepreneurship and employment opportunities for the youth as well as protecting the environment from degradation.

RICE-WN in April 2019 worked with refugee welfare councils to and identified five youth groups in Rhino camp and Omugo extension refugee areas to pilot plastic waste recycling. The specific objectives include:

- To engage local communities in plastic waste management practices so as to reduce littering and improve upon sanitation in the settlement.
- Reduce effects of plastic waste on soil fertility and water
- Promote avenues for employment and entrepreneurship among youth, women and men in rural communities of West Nile.

One of the youth groups is collecting plastic waste every Saturday to make building materials. A group member, Ms. Nensah Tabu 18 years old in senior two testified that the project has reduced the waste in their village and kept them busy on Saturdays.

"We have so far collected and recycled over 50 sacks of plastic waste in two weeks' in June 2019. The challenge of waste remains, due to littering with alcohol sachets in the trading centres; some soils in Ofua zone Rhino camp refugee settlement is infertile due to the littered plastic waste which affects water infiltration when it rains leading to poor yields. When we continue with the project, it will improve on soil fertility and we will also earn money to meet our domestic requirements".

Oliver Lugala, another youth group leader in Ocea talented youth group in Rhino camp refugee settlement is happy that recycling of plastic waste has become a source of employment and resilience for the members.

“Plastic waste in Ocea has been a huge problem, Ocea is a big trading centre with a huge population of both refugees and host communities doing business in the market, a lot of plastic is generated. We collected 29 sacks of plastic in one hour when we first started the project,” he says.

Another youth group called Talented youth group has also started recycling the plastic waste in their area.

“I used to lay bricks in south Sudan to earn money but when we came here I did not have any source of income to support my family and continue with school; this knowledge is very powerful and it helps me to make a contribution to the environment and it’s also a source of self-employment to earn money. Many people don’t know that waste can be a lucrative venture. I can’t do this alone but with my group members”, Lugala said.

Currently, the groups are marketing the products to individuals through their marketing committees who visit different partners constructing within the settlement and in host communities. RICE-WN through social media and workshops is also conducting marketing to the public about the products. So far three individuals have ordered for a total of 4000 pavers.

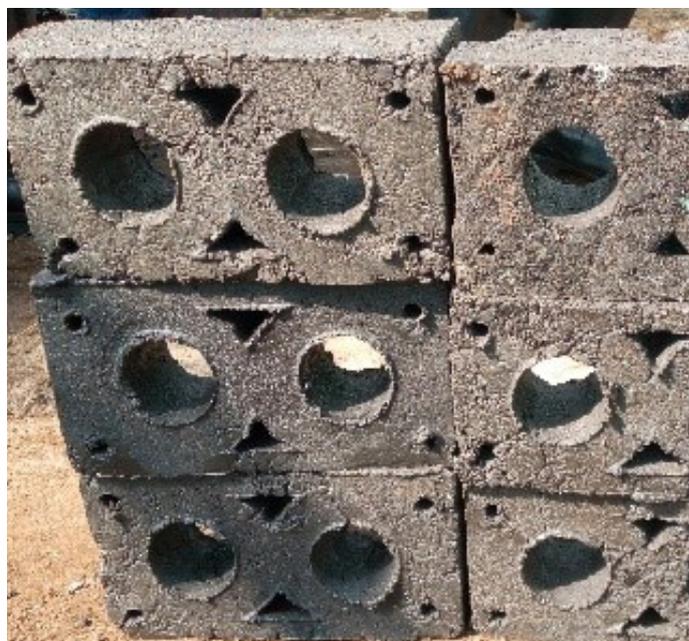
RICE-WN is supporting the youth groups to draft a contract for the supplies. Each paver costs 1000ugx and each ventilator costs 2000ugx.

From the start of the initiative to date, RICE-WN involved different stakeholders to participate in the processes and

document good practices of the initiative. Stakeholders such as United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Office of the Prime Minister, sub county officials among others were officially invited to participate and support the groups in growing the idea. As a result RICE-WN has been approached by World Vision and Save the Children to learn about how the initiative can work for more youth and they proposed a scale up of the intervention to European Union.

Lessons learnt

- Empowering the refugee youth reduces their dependency on natural resources and strengthens their capacity to build personal assets as a mechanism of survival away from home. They will stop engaging in anti-social acts, keep busy and think more about contributing to environment protection as they also earn from the environment.
- Plastic waste recycling into building materials is a unique business model that conserves the environment as well as create opportunity for entrepreneurship and employment of beneficiaries. The model has low production cost because it is using waste for wealth and local materials are used to fasten the process.
- The initiative of plastic waste recycling requires automated machines for heating and mixing the liquid to the sharp sand. Therefore, if the youth are availed with machines that can fasten the process of heating and mixing the plastic waste liquid and sand then they can meet customer orders for different products within a short time. The process is labour intensive due to the fact that every step is conducted manually.



Samples of plastic waste recycled into stone pavers and ventilators by different youth groups selected to pilot the initiative in Rhino camp and Omugo extension in Arua

FROM HANDOUTS TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY: REFUGEES DETERMINED TO TRANSFORM



Refugees in Kyaka II R/S demarcating Kakoni Wetland with Concrete Pillar. Photo by Sam Nyakoojo JESE

By Sam Nyakoojo
JESE

UGANDA remains the third largest refugee-hosting country in the world and the largest in Africa, with over 1.29 million refugees and asylum-seekers. Majority of these refugees come from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, South Sudan, Somalia and Burundi.

Most of the refugees depend on humanitarian support (cash and none cash items) from UNHCR and other supporting organizations. The humanitarian actions are intended to respond to immediate and short-term aid, which includes provision food, water, temporary shelters and health services. These are meant to “save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity” during and after man-made crises and disasters caused by natural hazards.

However, humanitarian aid lacks the aspect of long-term response to structural issues, particularly systemic poverty, that may hinder economic, institutional and social development in any given society, and assists in building capacity to ensure resilient communities and sustainable livelihoods.

Kyaka II is one of the many refugee settlements in Uganda located in Kyegegwa District, currently hosting over 100,000 refugees on 82sqKM of land, with around 15% considered as fragile areas (wetlands). Refugees in the settlement derive their livelihood mainly from humanitarian support supplemented by farming of seasonal crops like maize and beans on small scale given the small size of the plots allocated to them, which have been reducing gradually from 50M by 50M to current 30m by 30m due to increased influx of refugees. It's on this piece of land that the individual refugee and his or her dependents

(below 18years) has to put up shelter and carry out agriculture, as they wait for food aid and other house hold items. With the reduction in plot sizes coupled with limited knowledge and skill and opportunities to engage into long term development, the refugees have remained locked in humanitarian support.

This has de-linked them from engaging in development processes to enhance their self-reliance. The humanitarian assistance has further propagated the mindset that refugees will survive without putting in much effort. “I don't care' with or without protecting the environment, I will still survive on cash or none cash aid provided,” said one of the refugees in Kakoni Zone, during an environment management sensitization meeting.

The transformation of the refugees from humanitarian to self-sufficiency is further hampered by the history attached to refugees coming from war-torn countries like DRC, South Sudan and Somalia where there is breakdown in the rule of law, people living with uncertainty, and limited development opportunities. While in Uganda, the refugees have limited understanding of the prevailing laws and policies, practices and opportunities in natural resources management and conservation. In the process of meeting their basic needs, they destroy the natural resources.

The destruction of natural resources has escalated tension between the host communities and the refugees with the former accusing the later of exploiting the surrounding environment through wetland encroachment and deforestation. This is hampering the mutual co-existence between the refugees and the nationals which in return affects development nexus.

There is need for more efforts by actors to change refugees' mindset and attitude to appreciate and contribute to the

protection of natural resources. Additionally, there is need to engage and persuade refugees to contribute to long term planning and development.

Uganda has developed different strategies and policies to encourage refugees and host communities to embrace development. Among the strategies is Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHOPE) which serve as a bridge for the humanitarian and development approaches.

The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) which calls for inclusion of the refugees in the communities from the very beginning and be allowed to live among host communities. "Supporting the refugees to thrive, not just survive". The framework further calls for refugees to contribute to local economies and fueling the development of the communities hosting them. Allowing refugees to benefit from national services and integrating them into national development plans.

To enhance realization of the Uganda Humanitarian-development nexus strategies, JESE supported by CARE-Uganda under STRENPO project, capitalized on building the capacity of the refugees to embrace development aspects. This is done through information sharing, knowledge and skills enhancement in natural resources management and better farming practices/climate smart aspects to enhance refugees change of perception/attitude and practice to development nexus as opposed to humanitarian aspects.

In the process, key achievements have been realized and these include; formation of eight refugee environment management committees under the umbrella CBO of "Tucunge Mazingira" meaning let us conserve the environment. The structures are overseeing the environment management in Kakoni Zone Kyaka II refugee settlement and engaging in sustainable farming practices using the climate smart approaches.

The environment conservation structures have gone ahead to organize and conduct several joint monitoring of degraded wetlands and routine reporting of the environment management practices in settlement. The structures spearheaded the restoration of Kakoni wetland, through mobilization, sensitization and demarcation of the 14Km Kakoni Zone wetland boundary with concrete pillars and live markers refer to fig 1 attached above.

This was done with the JESE/CARE support guided by Natural resources department of Kyegegwa District local government and Office of the prime minister Kyaka II refugee settlement and UNHCR. The direct participation of the refugees in environmental restoration has greatly changed their mindset and attitude towards environment mgt as quoted saying one of the refugees below

"Uganda is not my home country; I came from Congo 10years ago and I have been living in Kyaka II refuge settlement. I therefore take Uganda as my country and I feel a I have a responsibility to support Uganda's development agenda mainly in Natural resources management. As refugees we have decided to voluntarily play a monitoring and reporting of environment management practices, play a mobilization and sensitization role of our fellow refuges to stop destroying the environment, so that our brothers, sisters and children who are running

away from war in Congo can find a better environment and live peacefully here in Uganda " Said Maherizi Jean Congolese refugee.

Furthermore, the refugees are being supported through Farmers Field and Business school (FFBS) and backyard gardening house hold land use plans development approaches. These approaches are meant to enhance knowledge and skills through hands-on training and learning by pre and post harvesting technologies by doing, to maximize on production and maintaining the quality of the harvests to attract better markets as well adopting to climate change. Over 300 refugees in Kakoni Zone have benefited from so from FFBS demo sites and conducted cross learning with the adjacent host communities. 100 House hold piloted chicken gardens and have access to vegetables throughout the year.

Enhanced coordination and networking between the refugees and responsible offices in the management of natural resources (office of the prime minister, through its structures of Refugee Welfare committees, Natural resources department of Kyegegwa District Local government. This is through joint planning and enforcement. Further more collaboration between the refugees and nationals has been enhanced through information sharing and learning from each other in modern farming practices.

Developed and established 18 pieces of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials in form of signposts, clearly elaborate the Do's and Don'ts in wetland management. The IEC materials were established at strategic points adjacent to the wetland in Kakoni Zone, where they are easily seen. This has enhanced the understanding of the refugees both old and the new on the wetland management and general environment management practices in the settlement.

"I have lived in Kyakall settlement, Kakoni zone for only four months. I have never been in any sensitization meeting about the wetland management. I only got to know about the wetland management and conservation issues from the seeing and reading Do's and Don'ts on the sign post established by JESE and CARE," Said Nzaimana Ibingyira a refugee.

In conclusion, the transition from humanitarian to development context should be introduced gradually and systematically to ensure a holistic and coordinated approach which is embraced by both the refugees and nationals' individuals and their respective structures. .



SEEKING SURVIVAL OPTIONS IN A REFUGEE SETTLEMENT: ONE WOMAN'S EXPERIENCE



Pita in her garden with one of her daughters weeding. Photo by: Amule James Samuel-RICE WN

By Jennifer L. Nangole
Care International in Uganda

PITA sits at her small rugged house in Imvepi refugee settlement in Arua district, pondering her next move. She wants to collect firewood and water to prepare a meal for her four children. She worries about the distance she has to walk to find firewood and water, afraid that members of the host community might assault her if she trespassed through one of their gardens.

The wrinkles in her once youthful face compromise her beautiful broad smile, because of the endless worry she bears for her four children. Pita's firstborn daughter is even in greater danger of missing school during her menstrual periods because she cannot easily access sanitary pads in the settlement due to their high cost and her mother's lack of access to credit. Pita's fear is also compounded by the heavy rains and strong spinning winds that are sweeping across the settlement destroying houses, shops and even breaking trees! Many women in the refugee settlements silently suffer the same pain as Pita's.

Pita fled to Uganda from her home country in South Sudan when the war between the government and rebels broke out in 2013, barely two years after South Sudan became independent. When she arrived in Uganda in 2013, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) allocated her a plot of land measuring 90 square metres. OPM is the government body in charge of refugee affairs.

The plot of land allocated is used for settlement and cultivation. Although Pita is thankful to Uganda government, she feels the plot cannot support her to carry out farming activities to supplement the food rations distributed by humanitarian agencies in the refugee settlement hence reducing her adaptation capacity to respond to other unforeseen shocks and stress that may arise!

As part of the comprehensive refugee framework, (CRRF) after three years in the settlement, the amount of the food rations distributed to households is reduced and fully stopped after five years. Pita has been affected by this policy as it's already five years since she sought refuge here.

Recently, a group of community trainers visited Pita's zone and introduced the idea of a Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA). Pita decided to join Morikidinta Boric farmer's village savings and loans association group (VSLA). At first Pita was hesitant to join the VSLA group due to fear of where she would get money to save! But through constant awareness raising and sensitizations, by RICE-WN, she finally made her decision and became a member of the savings group in Zone 2 in Imvepi refugee settlement.

The group was formed under the strengthening Resilience and promoting inclusive Governance (STRENPO) project in Imvepi refugee settlement in 2018. The Morikidinta group members were trained on how to do farming with a business perspective, so as to increase food security as well as manage natural resources. The trainers also introduced the VSLA element as an off-farm resilience activity aimed at promoting adaptation and building resilience of refugees and host communities against the shocks and stresses that may arise as a result of climate change, land degradation, conflict and displacement.

As a member, Pita saves one thousand five hundred (1500) a week with the group. She generates her income from her small road side business where she sells doughnuts locally known as koboyo in Kakwa.

Due to lack of land for cultivation, she took a loan of sixty thousand shillings(60.000ugx) at 10% interest from the group to rent land for farming for one season from the host community in Imvepi. Pita is using this land to plant onions to generate income, continue saving, boost her small business and

sustain her family. Now Pita proudly harvests her vegetables and she is able to generate ten thousand- to thirteen thousand five hundred shillings (13500 Ugx) from her daily sales. Pita says she wants to take advantage of every opportunity that comes her way and she also hopes to replicate what she is learning from the group back home if she ever returns to South Sudan.

In many of the Ugandan refugee settlements, just like in their host community counter parts, women continue to face life challenges ranging from low access to credit, lack of land, low literacy levels as a result of stresses and shocks induced by conflict and climate change. (CARE GCVCA, 2019) Currently Uganda host 1.3 million refugees most of them coming from South Sudan and Democratic republic of Congo. Statistics show that about 82% of those in refugee settlements are women and children.

STRENPO project uses a gender transformative approach to support communities to address gender barriers and power imbalance that prevent women and girls from actively participating in resiliency building interventions.

The approach goes beyond individual self-enhancement to transforming the power dynamics and structural systems that reinforce gender based inequalities. It entails engaging different groups of women, men, Boys and girls to critically examine, challenge, and question the power relations and its associated gender norms that underlie the invisible gender based gap in many societies.

CARE envisions that transformation can be measured by examining three domains of empowerment as seen below

Agency: Looks at promoting a woman's individual ability and capacity including her attitude, knowledge skills, assets, critical reflections and access to services so that she can move and become resilient to shocks and stress.

Relation: This looks at the power relationships that people have and includes group membership and activism.

Transforming structures: Takes notes of the different discriminatory social norms, values, exclusionary practices, both in the non-formal and formal spheres such as laws, policies, procedures and services.

As a result of this approach, powerful women have emerged in their communities to take center stage in building resilient livelihoods in their communities. And there is already an indication that Women hold the most potential for creating and sustaining meaningful change in their lives and the lives of their children, families, and communities, as such the best insurers of resilience in communities in Uganda. Women show readiness and enthusiasm to lead resilience-building efforts, and have time and again demonstrated their ability to do so.

After enjoying the benefits of the approach, Pita says: "I am so happy to be a member in this group. My husband died seven years ago and left four children and me behind. I have tried hard to make sure all my children make it to primary 7. After primary seven it is hard to manage and pay school fees for four children."

The biggest challenge to women like Pita has been the continuous dry spells with no alternative options to supplement rains when they go off.

A combination of approaches of VSLA, farmer field business model, women leadership trainings, creates opportunities and straight path for women to lead the way to poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth.

When women are given the opportunities and have access to a full range of suitable economic and affordable financial services in the communities they can withstand shocks and fulfill their economic and social potential.



Pita and her children pose for a photo in their compound .Photo by Amule Samuel-RICE WN

REFUGEES ADOPT NEW FARMING PRACTICES TO FIGHT HUNGER AND POVERTY



A pit dug in a kitchen garden to harvest water – April 19 Photo by Samson Ongebo RICE-WN

By Samson Ongebo
M&E Officer RICE-WN

TOMEROJOJO is Kakwa language meaning unity. It is the name of a refugee farmers' group located in Omugo Refugee Settlement, Arua District of West Nile, Uganda. The group majorly comprises South Sudanese refugees, faced with harsh weather which does not favor agriculture.

Since they joined the settlement in July 2017, the refugees have been grappling with long dry spells, food scarcity and absolute poverty. About 75% of the land in Omugo refugee settlement is degraded with little suitability for agriculture. Unlike the rest of Arua which enjoys two rainy seasons annually, Omugo receives just about 1600mm annually. The land is generally rocky and does not favor farming.

The poor weather has had devastating effects on agriculture. Almost 100% of the refugees in the settlement rely on food aid for survival, given by food agencies like World Food Programme and World Vision. Many homes depend on only two meals per day and in times of food shortage, mothers sacrifice their food for the children. Moreover, many refugee households in Omugo do not have stable and reliable sources of income. As a coping strategy, most refugees sell their food rations to the host community and provide casual labor to generate income or resolve to barter trade as an option for basic home necessities like soap and clothing.

Aware of these pertinent issues affecting the refugees in Omugo Refugee Settlement, Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE-WN), a non-governmental organization found in Arua District, designed a project targeting refugees and host communities. The project, known as Stim-

ulating Adaptive Capacities of Communities (SACC), is funded by Care International in Uganda under a four-year program on climate resilience called Strengthening Resilience and Promoting Inclusive Governance Program (STRENPO).

SACC seeks to promote environmental and economic transformation of communities using an approach known as Enabling Rural Innovation (ERI). The ERI approach empowers communities to adopt proper environmental management practices and to take on agriculture as a business.

Conscious of the problems affecting them, 30 like-minded refugees gathered to give birth to Tomerojojo in November 2018. Formation of the group was supported by the SACC project to champion transformation of communities in Omugo III village of Omugo Refugee settlement. As beneficiaries of the project, the group was trained on five modules of ERI that essentially focus on: market-oriented agriculture for sustainable livelihoods and food security especially kitchen gardening; and Environmental management for sustainable climate conditions through agro-forestry.

As a result of the trainings, the group has realized tremendous achievements. To combat the effects of long dry spells, Tomerojojo was trained on small scale rain and water harvesting through digging pits within the kitchen gardens to act as a source of water for irrigation, a practice which has now been adopted by all members.

For purposes of sustainable climate conditions, the members of Tomerojojo group were trained on agro-forestry and tree planting. In April 2019, the group planted a total of 1,050 tree seedlings along borderlines in their homes. The major tree species planted are Neem for wood, Moringa and fruit trees

for income and food. All the trees planted survived the harsh weather conditions.

“I never knew trees would grow here because of rocky sand,” said the group Chairperson, adding that each member had so far planted 35 trees at home.

To further contribute towards income generation, the group was supported to conduct market research in the local market and identify appropriate enterprises to plant for sale. Tomerojojo agreed on planting groundnuts and hibiscus for business. The group has rented one (1) acre of land to grow hibiscus. In Arua market, 1 basin of hibiscus is sold at UGX 40,000 (USD 10.5).

Additionally, Tomerojojo was trained on Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) methodology. This is a strategy aimed at promoting increased savings among households. It also promotes association among the refugees since VSLA meetings are held weekly hence providing avenues for the refugees to meet and share common challenges.

Grace, a group member of Tomerojojo, planted and harvested three bags of groundnuts in June 2019. She applied best agronomic practices of planting in line and digging trenches to conserve water. This was not the case for other village members who used the same old style of farming. A bag of groundnuts

sells at about UGX 90,000 (USD 23.6) in the market.

“This is first time I get groundnuts ever since I came here,” Grace stated.

For food security, Tomerojojo group was trained on kitchen gardening. Every group member has started a garden to supplement food rations received from food agencies.

Tomerojojo is grateful for the opportunity to participate in the SACC project. The group believes this is a chance to escape from the tight grips of hunger and absolute poverty. Through the VSLA approach, Tomerojojo envisions that within the next three years, each member of the group should have saved upto to UGX 2,000,000 (USD 526.3).

“We are very lucky to be in this project,” said the Chairperson. “We don’t want hunger. We don’t want to be poor.”

To be able to overcome harsh weather conditions – brought about by high levels of deforestation and poor quality soils – so as to achieve food security and increased incomes, communities should apply proper soil and water conservation methods. Organizations and development agencies should train more communities, especially refugees since they are vulnerable and also contribute to high levels of deforestation, on Enabling Rural Innovation approaches.



A group member checks her kitchen garden, planted in lines – Mar 19. Photo by Samson Ongebo- RICE-WN

OUTCOME HARVESTING: THE NEW WAY TO COLLECT EVIDENCE

A personal experience with adapting and embedding Outcome Harvesting methodology. It is intended to show other CSOs how CARE has transformed the way of understanding, monitoring and collecting evidence in their daily work.

**By Otim Robert,
MEL Specialist CARE International in Uganda**

I was introduced to Outcome Harvesting (OH) in March 2019. This happened during a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) workshop organized by CARE International in Uganda, under the STRENPO. I did not know much about the methodology and could not anticipate whether it would be a user friendly M&E approach or that it would even be adopted by partner organizations.

As a new project MEL Specialist then, the method puzzled me – as I was used to very simple monitoring, learning and evaluation methodologies and processes. I was lucky to have been trained on the method by a highly skilled international facilitator, Julius Nyangaga of Right Tract Africa. The more he facilitated the training, the more I became passionate about Outcome Harvesting.

OH is all about identifying and collecting evidence of changes that have been realized in the process of doing activities. These changes are called outcomes which is what project participants are doing differently due to

project influence, and the process of identifying and collecting them is called harvesting – hence the name outcome harvesting.

The process involves identifying and engaging with the people or actors who have changed as a result of our interventions. The actors then tell the story of how our project influenced the change in their behavior or the change in policies that affect their life. These changes are verified by another person and then shared with people who matter to the project. The sharing is done to promote learning and usage of the evidence processed by the method. It involves reflecting on what we influence and control in the environment of the project.

One good thing about OH methodology is that it helps me to always identify, document and put together strong evidence of our contributions because an outcome harvested is not complete without the evidence that change happened.

It used to be very hard for me to identify and track evidence of change of our interventions especially the resilience building components. But OH has made it easier to everyone in the project. CARE and its partners on the STRENPO project have since adopted OH and they are finding it very useful.

Through OH, I was able to get and report evidence of outcomes. This enriched our donor annual report. The box below shows some of the evidence reported to DANIDA.

Outcome: Capacity of central and local governments enhanced to respond to community demands related to healthy eco-systems, accountable institutions and access to natural resources and opportunities by women, youth and refugees.

The Office of The Prime Minister (OPM) in Kyaka II refugee settlement and Kyegegwa district local government have committed to addressing natural resources degradation like encroachment on wetlands and deforestation in refugee settlement. Consequently, 103 refugee households have been identified and plans are underway for reallocation. An area of 07 acres were allocated by the government for restoration with indigenous tree to which government will take lead.

Significant of outcome: The component of natural resource governance in the settlement was initially not a priority for the OPM as a component to advance resilience through sustainable management of natural resources in the settlement.

Contribution to Outcome: The presence of Joint Effort to Save The Environment(JESE) in the settlement enhanced coordination and catalysed response of OPM and other duty bearers to implement wetland policies. It further informed OPM and duty bearers the need for the development of wetland management bye-laws the need in the settlement.

Documented by: Sam Nyakojo, Programme Coordinator, Joint Effort to Save The Environment

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