



THE UGANDA RED CROSS SOCIETY
RECOVERY, RISK REDUCTION AND LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT IN UGANDA.

Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) activities and its role as an auxiliary to the Government, has played a vital role in the Government of Uganda's (GoU) 2005 IDP Policy.¹ In line with its responsibilities as a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) and its mandate to assist the most vulnerable people affected by violence and prolonged displacement in the northern part of the country, the Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) has a clear role to play.

Since 2002 URCS has assisted Internally Displaced Populations in northern Uganda through the provision of essential life saving support to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in camp settings and has continued to provide support to those that have begun the slow process of return to their places of origin. The assistance has ranged from the mere provision of Essential Household Items to an integrated and multi-dimensional assistance incorporating Water and

Sanitation activities, HIV & AIDs, Gender Based Violence, Seeds and Tools distribution.

Background

The heavy rains that occurred in the Eastern and Northern parts of Uganda between July and mid September 2007 caused severe flooding which led to the destruction of several infrastructures and farmlands. Several districts in the region were severely affected particularly Soroti, Amuria, Katakwi, Bukedea, Kumi, Lira and Sironko. 80% of the crops submerged, roads and bridges were all washed away and the situation led to the government declaration of the affected areas a state of emergency. Many agencies responded to the crisis URCS inclusive.

URCS took the lead agency role in the humanitarian operation among other organizations to help save the lives of the most vulnerable floods affected communities. Activities which were carried out by URCS included; training volunteers

¹ The Uganda IDP policy

in data collection and assessment concerning flood operations to identify the most urgent needs of the affected communities, distribution of non food items which included soap, blankets, water containers, kitchen sets, purification sachets, tarpaulins, mosquito nets and family kits besides the activities on health addressing the cases of malaria and provision of clean safe water.

According to the findings of the assessments conducted by Uganda Red Cross, it was estimated that more than 89,000 households were severely affected and 58,000 people displaced. With about 80% of crops destroyed by floods, food security remained precarious thus URCS started an early recovery programmes which is currently being addressed through activities, like the shelter programme where communities are being encouraged to construct flood resistant houses to reduce floods impact and provide with construction materials to 10,000 households, provision of seeds and tools to the families that were affected and also addressing the issue of water and sanitation through construction of latrines and water sources, Plus construction of floods resistant huts different from the original ones that were had no raised foundation.

The recovery programme has seen the construction of 8,000 floods resistant huts (shelter programme), distribution of seeds and tools (food security) and construction of water and sanitation facilities.

1. Shelter Program

The floods and water-logging of 2007 led to widespread damage to transport infrastructure, isolating communities and also hindering humanitarian assessments and the delivery of much-needed relief supplies. In addition, many families sustained significant damage to their huts, and consequently their household goods and food stores. In response to this, URCS engaged communities in construction of 8,000 floods resistant shelters within the affected communities of Katakwi and Amuria.



Volunteers help construct a model floods resistant hut in Soroti.

Community based volunteers were trained to support mobilization, community

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participation, sensitization and awareness in the camps and villages.



The community based volunteers were equipped with wheel barrows, rammers; wood saw, claw hammer, panga/machete, hoe, axe, pick-axe, tape measure, spirit levels, dump levels and a first aid kit. While the households were provided with sickles, brick making moulds, dump proof membrane polythene sheeting, anti-termite treatment for wood, sisal rolls, assorted engineering nails, 20 litre jerry can, medium trowels, window shutter, door shutter and binding wires and in return the community contributed grass for thatching, wood for roofing and natural tying fibres. As a measure to replace the cut down trees during construction, provision of tree seedlings to the same households was key for afforestation and economic security especially improved fruit seedlings- **See**



Complete model flood resistant hut

Below one of the orange seedling in Amaseniko parish



Bicycles were distributed to the community based volunteers to facilitate easy movement, monitoring and supervision within the affected communities. Pieces of tarpaulins were distributed to the shelter beneficiaries to act as temporary materials in the absence of grass and also to prevent rain from destroying walls and molded bricks.

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One of the completed huts in Katakwi

2. Food Security

The affected communities were provided with 21,000 seeds and tools to 21,000 households in Usuk, Omodoi, Ogongoja, Kapujan, and Toromo in Katakwi and Kapelebyong, Murungatuny, and Acowa in Amuria district. The seed kits distributed comprised of 5kgs of maize, 5kgs of beans, 5kgs of sorghum, 4kgs of cow peas, 0.02kgs of sukuma wiki, 0.02kgs of Amaranthus, 0.02kgs of onions, 0.02kgs of egg plants, and 0.02kgs of Okra for both the first and second seasons. The tools distributed comprised of hoes, sickles, pangas, and axes.



A beneficiary showing off her eggplant



A maize garden in Obalanga parish in Amuria district



Distribution of seeds and tools in Amuria district

Farmer groups were formed and trained in Amuria and Katakwi and were provided with Oxens and Ox-ploughs together with planting materials through seed fair/voucher system in an effort to move from subsistence farming to intensive agricultural production. In addition to the above, Trainings were conducted to support agricultural based practices and food security assessment and crop production, business planning and marketing skills with the support from Arapai agricultural college link in Soroti. Participants benefitted in basic skills and knowledge on the above.

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A set of oxen and ox-ploughs distributed to farmer groups

The trained community based volunteers provided support and supervision in post distribution (to check germination and planting rate), Crop performance evaluation (to check the growth and yield) and Post harvest (to check the actual yield out of what was given to determine whether there is need for more intervention or not). Vouchers were given to farmers who got seeds in the seed fair market.

3. Water and Sanitation

Under this component, a number of activities were planned to contribute to improve health status, health awareness and reduced incidences of water-borne and vector transmitted diseases among the floods affected households.

URCS engaged in the construction of institutional latrines in primary schools in the affected schools of Amuria and Katakwi,

construction of family latrines and bathing shelters in the affected communities, rehabilitation of broken boreholes, disinfection of water sources, distribution of pump repair kits (with consultation based on district water officials), distribution of soap and latrine digging kits to affected households. Water user committees were established to sensitize and support water-user committees based on the participatory hygiene and transformation approach. Volunteers were trained in effective water source management to support hygiene promotion in their respective communities. Awareness sessions in the form of radio spots and talk shows were conducted to promote sanitation and hygiene improvement at both the community and household level.



One of the boreholes under construction in Katakwi

A volunteer inspecting one of the protected springs in Apala sub county Lira district.



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DRR Interventions in Rwenzori Region - Bundibugyo District.

Biomass Energy Saving Stoves

Uganda faces a biomass energy crisis marked by an increasing imbalance between the supply and demand of the firewood by households, institutions and industries. Ninety three percent (93%) of the energy consumption is wood fuel (fire wood and charcoal) and agricultural waste. Wood fuel is the main energy sources and its utilization significantly stimulates the growth of urgently needed rural based industries. The poverty eradication plan (PEAP, 2000) highlights the link between energy and basic needs and notes that the dependence on fuel wood increases the burden on women's time and cause environmental degradation. The first step in climbing the energy ladder is therefore to use improved wood technologies and introduce more efficient methods of wood use.

The Need for use of Biomass Saving Technologies

Widespread use of wood fuel is one of the factors contributing to environmental of energy related problems is through an extensive dimension of biomass. energy efficient technologies. The Improved Wooden Saving Stove technology is one of the energy resources in this direction.

degradation, a big factor contributing to climate change. Signs are clear that **Climate Change** is already happening in the Rwenzori region.

According to the first ever government assessment, quoted by state-owned New Vision on Saturday 7, April 2007, climate change has also started hitting Uganda and the impact is dramatic.

The ice caps on Rwenzori Mountains in Western Uganda receded to 40 percent as per 1955 records and are set to disappear within the next two decades, affecting wild life species and increasing the erosive power of River Semliki. The warming around the mountainous areas will also drastically affect wildlife species.

One of the most effective strategies to contribute towards sustainable reduction



Improved biomass energy efficient technologies have been developed to improve energy efficiency for households, institutional and industrial practices. These include the domestic and institutional firewood stoves and the firewood baking oven.

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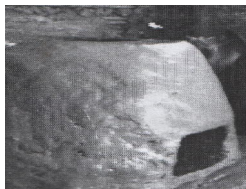
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These improved household stoves have an efficiency of 30% (average) compared to the traditional (open) 3-stone fire stoves at 4-15.6%, in a high power water-boiling test. These stoves help the users to have firewood savings of 50-60% when compared to the traditional (open) 3 stone stove. Yet strength of these stoves is that they are built using local materials including clay, anthill soil and sand for the body whereas insulating materials includes sawdust, dry banana peelings, pumice and vermiculite.



***Rocket Lorena stove
constructed by ToTs***



***A Shielded Stove constructed
by the TOTs***

Of the two stoves promoted, the Rocket Lorena with two pots was most embraced by the trained communities in comparison to the shielded stove with a single pot

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Lessons Learnt from the above implemented activities.

- Lack of clear and true information from the beneficiaries due to dependency syndrome.
- Community participation is paramount for sustainability
- Return resettlement and re-integration process is gradual and dynamic and needs to use bottom up approach.
- Even though volunteers were trained before the projects were implemented, there is need to build their capacities capturing all project components.
- To guarantee sustainability, care should be taken to ensure that the government technical services are involved in the monitoring and technical supervision of the activities.
- There is need for a much more integrated view of activities in order to maximize projects benefits.
- There is need for micro-finance initiative programs in order to continue with the farmer groups formed.
- The recovery programme should have a long term frame in order to allow for building process above the rainy season most especially the shelter program.
- The institution needs to plan for an exit strategy most especially if the project timeframe has been set.
- Trained communities on energy saving stoves should be monitored to enhance the implementation of stove construction.
- Tree planting should be promoted for fuel wood. Farmers should be trained in tree planting and management skills. Seeds for fast growing trees e.g. Calliandra, Sesbania and Acacia should be provided to the communities.
- The District forest department and environment should get directly

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involved in the tree planting activities by providing skills.

- Institutions like schools, hospitals and health centers within the communities that were trained should be considered for fuel wood saving stoves, because they use a lot of fuel in catering for big populations.
- Exchange visits among communities should be promoted.
- Agro-forestry should be promoted.

Conclusion

By implementing these projects, the Uganda Red Cross Society, together with IFRC, DFID, OXFAM and ECHO, have helped reduce the risk of food insecurity and promoted adaptation of climate change for returning communities and those directly affected by the effects of climate change.

Despite the lack of a detailed evaluation, it is clear that return and recovery projects have already had a positive impact on household food security in North and eastern Uganda by improving availability, accessibility and consumption of their own produce, thus reducing the impact of risks involved.

Such projects that link the emergency phase to recovery and development, can serve as an example both for the Uganda Red Cross and for other National societies in other countries that are frequently affected by disasters that lead to food insecurity.

For the success of the projects, various community problems had to be solved using an integrated approach. Combining different activities, such as Food security, shelter, water/sanitation and community health, has given these communities a certain degree of socio-economic stability.

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