



The Humanitarian

All you need to know about Uganda Red Cross Society activities

October - December 2008



*The Red Cross Kapelebyong HCV/AIDS
drama group sensitising communities about HCV
as part of URCS interventions to fight the
scourge*

Word from the editor

In the month of October, African National Societies converged in Johannesburg for the 7th Pan African Conference. The delegates from 53 National Societies made commitments for the next 4 years and pledged to continue alleviating the suffering of the most vulnerable

Under the theme, "Together for Action in Africa, the conference focused on HIV/AIDS, Youth, Restoring Family Links, Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, Intensified capacity building for better health and care delivery. In the 4 years to come, Uganda Red Cross Society will be hosting an African youth training centre to equip youths on the continent with diversified skills.

In this issue we highlight some of the areas where Uganda's most vulnerable people have been reached through our interventions. You will read about the HIV/AIDS project that has given People Living with HIV/AIDS hope; the Internally Displaced People in Kasenyi who have received emergency relief support; the people of Kamuli accessing safe water, the orphans & vulnerable children that have acquired tailoring skills; election of new leaders of the National Youth Council; Entebbe Branch constructing its office; the former abducted children in Northern Uganda receiving psychosocial project; the volunteers that retrieved bodies from a collapsed building in Kampala and many more.

On a sad note, we lost one of our officers Mr. Abdul Masaba in a terrible road accident on Kampala-Jinja highway.

As we come to the end of 2008, we extend our gratitude to all local and international partners that have supported us.

MERRY XMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR

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Internally Displaced People in Kasenyi receive emergency relief items.



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Entebbe Branch starts office construction

Our Mission

To improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable people in Uganda as an effective and efficient humanitarian organization

Our Vision

An empowered, healthy and self-sustaining community that responds to the needs of the vulnerable

The Humanitarian is a quarterly publication of the Uganda Red Cross Society.

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Amuria sub branch/Soroti/Katakwi branches

HIV/AIDs home based care project: What beneficiaries say!

IN December 2008, Uganda Red Cross Society's HIV/AIDS Home Care Project in Amuria district, Eastern Uganda will be ending. Uganda Red Cross with support from the Norwegian Red Cross has been implementing the home care based project since 2002.

Catherine Ntabadde talked to some of the beneficiaries about the project

Johnson Ocung, Akilenga Village, Obalanga Sub County-"Through the

Red Cross, communities have been mobilized to go for Voluntary Counseling and Testing. People now freely

come out and **Johnson Ocung** accept their HIV status. We have also received food from the project and some beneficiaries are running income generating activities using the money provided by Red Cross. I am happy to have benefited from this project.

Odulai Nobert, Aojangur village, Obalanga Sub County-"I joined the project in 2004. Red Cross has been providing food, Voluntary Counselling and Testing services. They even always transport me from my village to Soroti



Odulai Nobert

to get ARVs. I also received mosquito nets, blankets and other items from

R e d C r o s s. When I tested positive, I was in shock. There was a lot of stigma at the time but when the Red Cross project started, things changed. People were always invited to workshops and we learnt to open up. The home care facilitators have been very helpful. The stigma has reduced. URCS has strong partnership with Aids Information Center, Uganda Cares and Health center 4 here in that when the project closes, arrangements have been made for us to continue receiving



Aiyo Grace, Oditel village, Kapelebyong Sub County-"The HIV project has educated me about Voluntary Counselling and Testing. I accepted to test and now I am living positively. Before Red

Cross started this project, there wasn't any intervention in HIV/AIDS. So many of us have tested positive and we hope Red Cross

can extend the project so that it takes on new people in the other areas so that



Aiyo Grace

other people can benefit the way we benefited, because we had lost hope but now we are hopeful, especially with knowledge, skills and IGAs given to us by Red Cross."

Amuro Stella, Oditel village, Kapelebyong Sub County- "Through this project, I have received treatment. I was given mosquito nets, blankets, food, polythene sheet. I also benefited from the income generating programme. The money Red Cross gave

me was used to buy chicken layers and now I sell the eggs. Before Red Cross' intervention, the situation was difficult. I was



Amuro Stella

being discriminated at home, I didn't have anyone to counsel me. I lacked my own income. I got the courage to test and decided to live positively. At first I feared to come out publicly but the Red Cross volunteers instilled in me the courage. The community is not discriminating us now, because Red Cross held many public campaigns against discrimination in markets, churches, schools, meetings and in even people's homes. Cross held many public awareness sessions.

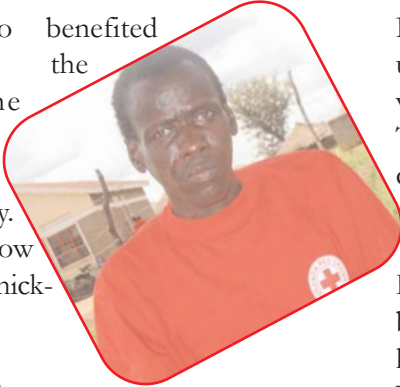
Omoding James, Apopong Village, Kapelebyong Sub County-"I took long to accept my HIV status. I was bedridden. The Red Cross home care facilitators kept on counseling me and they encouraged me to go for a test. The results came out positive but the home care facilitators counseled me. My mind was set and I didn't have any more worries. I received non food items like saucepans, mugs, plates, blankets, mosquito nets and nutritional food. Red Cross has a partnership with Uganda Cares and normally I am transported to Uganda Cares in Soroti to access ARVs. My weight has now increased from 48-58kgs.

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Beneficiaries' say on the URCS HIV/AIDS Project in Amuria

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I also benefited from the income generating activity. I now buy chickens



Omoding James

from the villages and I sell it in the market. This money has helped me look after my children. "If Red Cross succeeds in convincing Government or other partners to give us ARVs at Kapelebyong Health center 4, then most challenges will have been solved, since the place is very near," Omoding said.

Apiyo Alice, Kapelebyong village, Kapelebyong Sub County and a member of KUG, - After Red Cross discovered the Kapelebyong United Group (KUG), we were given more money for income generating activity. The group sells fish. The money we get



Apiyo Alice

from this project is loaned to members of the group for self sustenance. Before the Red Cross came to support us, I saw people dieing because they were not willing to come out openly. They could not access medical and counseling services.

Lawrence Malinga, Apopong village, Kapelebyong Sub County-"At the beginning, I had fear because I didn't know the disease I was suffering from. When the Red Cross project started, the home care facilitators and volunteers counseled me and encouraged me to go for testing. I tested positive and accepted the results. I learnt to live positive with support from the volunteers and now I am healthy. Red Cross has saved my life because I was at the dieing stage. The community is not discriminating me now as before and I am actively involved in community work, and I am now respected.

According to the beneficiaries in Kapelebyong Sub County, some of the achievements of URCS HIV project are:

- Psychosocial support
- Improved health status
- Improved standards of living because beneficiaries are earning incomes from the Income Generating Activity money provided by URCS.

- Voluntary Counselling and Testing
- Fighting stigma and discrimination
- Provision of ARVs
- Provision of transport
- Intensive awareness through Information, Education and Communication materials, drama, home visits.

What the beneficiaries enjoyed most about the Home Care Project:

- Effective Referrals to health centres and hospitals
- Psychosocial support
- Income generating activities
- Non food items
- Nutritional food
- Home care facilitators and volunteers for the sensitization about HIV/AIDS.
- Providing transport to Uganda Cares to access ARVs
- Creation of a 'new home' within URCS. The staff, volunteers and home care facilitators of Red Cross are very friendly and we are now part of the Red Cross family.
- Receiving of condoms and knowledge on how to use them from URCS.
- Acquiring knowledge and information on HIV/AIDS, how to take precautionary measures during sexual intercourse, balanced diet, non sharing of sharp objects.
- Participating in the URCS drama

HIV/AIDS AT WORKPLACE

HIV program improves lives of PLWHIV

By Sam Mugisha

During my interaction with People Living with HIV (PLWHIV) in Kampala South Branch, I discovered that majority of them have been able to open up and live positively, thanks to the Uganda Red Cross HIV Program. They say, the program has greatly improved their lives.

They have received psychosocial support from

the URCS home care facilitators. Not to be forgotten is the component of Income Generating Activity funds that has enabled many of the clients to run some businesses. Partnerships with other service providers have enabled them to access ARVs which URCS doesn't provide. One client cherished URCS for releasing

an ambulance to take her to the hospital at the time when she was critically sick and further still when she was discharged the ambulance was available to take her home.

The nutritional support extended to the clients has made them have health bodies

Relief Operation-Internally Displaced People (IDP)

IDPS in Kasenyi receive relief items



A URCS Mukono branch volunteer handing over items to a beneficiary. Looking on is Mr. Vincent Odoch Disaster Management Regional Programme Officer-Gulu region.

By Charles Nsamba

ASK and you shall be given; this is what the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Acholi and Lango regions living at Kasenyi Landing Site did and Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) together with the Office of the Prime Minister responded by providing the necessary support. . . Uganda Red Cross on request of the Office of the Prime Minister provided over 70 families with non food items which included blankets, tarpaulins, cooking pots, cups, plates and jerricans

URCS also offered to transport those who were ready to go back to their homes. The Office of the Prime Minister on the other hand provided food items which included maize flour and beans.

The distribution exercise, which was conducted by officers from the Disaster Management department and volunteers from Mukono branch on 15th October, took place at Kasenyi Landing Site, off Entebbe Road.

The Langi and Acholi IDPs left their homes seven years ago due to the Lord's Resistance Army insurgency and settled on

Kome Island in Mukono District. But they were recently forced to vacate the island due to its temporary closure by the government, citing use of poor fishing nets by the refugees.

One of the IDPs who received the relief assistance narrates his ordeal and appreciates Uganda Red Cross for always helping the vulnerable. "I came to Kampala aboard a produce truck in 2002, to live with my brother in Mbuya,"

Mr. Okiri Geoffrey, the General Secretary of the Lango Island Association narrates. "Two weeks later, my brother informed me that he could not afford to look after me any longer, and requested me to look for somewhere to stay."

"Life on the island was very good and we all made enough money to buy all that we needed and also educate our children. We gained a lot of experience while there and indeed, life became

better. " Mr. Okiri said it was not until the government banned use of all illegal fishing nets that life began to lose meaning. "All our nets were regarded illegal and we could not do business anymore. We could not afford to buy food. Diseases like malaria and cholera set in but we could not afford medical treatment, and so far, seven of our people have died. We had to start selling off all the property we had acquired like mattresses and other household items at a very cheap cost so that we could get money for food," he said.

Mr. Okiri said he sold off a new mattress he had bought at Shs50,000 just at Shs15,000, so as to buy drugs for his daughter. "Even as I speak now, I don't have a single penny because even the little I had saved, I used it for transport while trying to contact the Office of the Prime Minister and Uganda Red Cross for assistance.

Mr. Okiri said most IDPs are willing to go back home, though some of the Acholi refused to move along with them. He thanked Uganda Red Cross Society for helping them to resettle and start a new life.



A beneficiary after receiving non food items from Uganda Red Cross

Kampala Central Branch

Red Cross retrieves bodies from collapsed building

By Hasifa Kabejja

WHENEVER accidents occur at construction sites in the country, Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) moves fast to administer first aid to save lives of victims. But for the accident that occurred at the construction site of the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) pension building in Kampala in October, URCS was not able to offer the services (first aid) as eight of the nine victims had already died. After being buried by rubbles of a collapsed wall.

The accident occurred after an excavated wall of the NSSF building collapsed on the workers of Roko Construction Company. The excavated wall was reportedly weak.

Even without anyone to administer first aid to, the URCS rescue team comprising volunteers from Kampala Central and Kampala East branches and some headquarter staff did not leave the accident scene. The team helped to excavate and take the victims to Mulago Hospital Mortuary.

A somber mood hang around the scene as the URCS team carried bodies of the dead to ambulances. Relatives and friends of the deceased could not hold back tears as they watched their loved ones being retrieved from a huge pile of soil that collapsed on them.

The Programme Officer First Aid, Emergency Health and

Road Safety, Mr. Paul Okot, who headed the URCS team, commended the spirit of voluntarism the volunteers portrayed throughout the operation. He said it is through such operations that people get to know what URCS does and its image is boosted.

Mr. Okot cautioned the volunteers to always be alert, saying such emergencies do not warn before they occur. The NSSF operation was not the first experience for URCS. The National Society has engaged in several operations of the kind. They include the rescue of victims of the collapsed City of the Lord Church building at Kalerwe, a Kampala suburb in 2006 and victims of the collapsed Bwebajja building. URCS also swung into action early this year to save victims of the building at Nalya SS, Kampala East that col-

lapsed
killing
11 peo-
ple.



URCS Kampala Central volunteers at the excavation site on Lumumba Avenue, Kampala.

Iganga/Kamuli/Tororo Branches

Immunisation campaign intensified in Eastern Uganda

By Charles Nsamba

UGANDA Red Cross Society (URCS) under its immunization and malaria programme has conducted social mobilization for routine immunization and malaria sensitization in the most affected branches of Iganga, Mayuge, Kamuli and Tororo.

This has increased the level of awareness among the people and immunisation as a pac-

kage to promote health seeking behaviour among the communities in the project area.

The activity, aimed at reducing morbidity and mortality due to immunizable preventable diseases has been running in three selected sub counties of each of the selected branches. It mainly-

entails information dissemination geared at mobilising communities to take all children under five years for immunization.

In another development, over 2000 mosquito nets have been procured and are to be distributed to expectant mothers and children below five years

Pan African Conference

By Catherine Ntabadde

Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) was among the 53 African National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies that attended the 7th Pan African Conference from October 19-23, 2008. The national societies were reflecting on the current humanitarian priorities in Africa and to set the agenda for the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement the four years to come.

Observers from a number of National Societies outside the region, the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross attended. About 350 participants attended.

The theme for the year is "Together for Action in Africa" and the following topics were discussed:

- Infectious diseases with special emphasis on HIV/AIDS.
- Volunteer management with special emphasis on youth. (URCS presented a paper)
- Rising challenges through increased migration with special emphasis on Restoring Family Links.
- Building sustainable livelihoods
- Conflict/violence in urban settings
- Disaster risk reduction and management with special emphasis on climate change. (URCS presented a paper)
- Intensified capacity building for better health and care delivery. (URCS presented a paper)
- Auxiliary role of National Societies.
- International Disaster Response Law (IDRL).

URCS was represented by the Chairman Central Governing Board Mr. Tom Buruku, Secretary General Mr. Michael Nataka, Chairman

African National Societies make new commitments



Mr. Shaban Mawanda of URCS and also Federation Youth Member reading the Pan African youth resolutions on behalf of African youths.

National Youth Council Mr. Hannington Ssegirinya, Public Relations Officer Ms. Catherine Ntabadde and Mr. Shaban Mawanda, Risk Reduction Officer (IFRC Youth Member). URCS also chaired the first PAC youth meeting

Under the sub theme, "Communities in Action" participants noted the need for national societies to focus their efforts in promoting skills at the community level to cope with disasters and to roll out programmes where needed to strengthen community health, respect for diversity, human dignity and humanitarian values.

Delegates who discussed the sub theme, "Promoting community resilience" argued that while external support for vulnerable people is essential, it must be accompanied by programs which help the communities to be self-reliant. They noted that Red Cross Red Crescent grassroots' presence and auxiliary role provides a unique opportunity to promote sus-

tainable livelihood of communities.

Members of the "Resourcing community action" session concluded that Red Cross and Red Crescent actions in support of vulnerable people are facilitated by the specific and distinctive partnership they enjoy with governments through their auxiliary status and through the respect the emblems obtain in all communities.

The cross-cutting issues were International Humanitarian Law (IHL), Building partnerships and alliances, accountability and ownership.

URCS exhibited Information, Education and Communication materials, documentaries, photographs highlighting its activities for the different programmes it undertakes.

Check our archives section on www.redcrossug.org for details of the PAC resolutions and commitments and the PAC youth resolutions.

Lira/Gulu Branches

Psychosocial project reforming ex-abducted children

By Catherine Ntabadde

IF it was not for the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), she probably would be dead by now. Imagine a life where all the time you are walking, on the run, fighting and feeding on red pepper and cassava leaves for almost a year. As if that is not enough, for the whole one year, you are given the responsibility of looking after children of Uganda's rebel leader Joseph Kony in addition to undertaking several chores.

That is the life Evelyn Akao, 16, had to live until the UPDF rescued her in 2004 at the boarder of Gulu in Northern Uganda and Sudan. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels abducted her in 2003 from her village in Aloi Sub County, Lira district. From her village, the rebels abducted 13 people and only two people, her and a brother are alive. Her both parents were also killed.

When the dark skinned stout Akao returned to her village in 2004, she was anti social and would hardly speak to anyone. In fact if a person approached her, she would run away. This is a result of the trauma she experienced while in the bush with the rebels.

Akao is not alone! She is among thousands of former abducted children now settling back in their communities in Gulu, Lira, Kitgum and Pader Districts, all in Northern Uganda.

Akao who stays with a guardian can now freely narrate her story as a result of Uganda Red Cross Society's (URCS) psychosocial project implemented in Lira and Gulu districts. Because of the counselling she is receiving from URCS' community volunteer counsellors, Akao has learnt to socialise and interact with other children.

Thanks to the Finnish Red Cross which has enabled URCS reach out to 320 war affected children in the two districts. Under the project, URCS undertakes one to one counselling of the beneficiaries, home visits to follow up the beneficiary,

sports like football, netball, volleyball and music and drama activities as a way of keeping the beneficiaries busy.

"I participate in all the music and drama activities and I also play netball. I now freely interact with people because the Red Cross has counselled me," Akao says. Asked how she thinks her future



Evelyn beautifying the veranda of her hut in Aloi, Lira.

will be, Akao sheds tears saying she thinks she has no future because she is not in school. She however hastens to add that she is happy to be back home.

URCS trained the community counsellors to ensure that the beneficiaries' lives are improved.

As for 10 year old Mark Oti, his main chore in the bush was to beat other children that tried to escape and to fetch water. He was also not spared of the beating when he tried to escape.

Abducted in June 2005, Oti was rescued from Sudan in April 2006 by the UPDF. "If you refused to beat the children, they would beat you instead. In the area I was, there were many children especially those aged between 15-18 but we also had children aged between 5-14 years. I always wanted to come back home but it was difficult to escape," Oti explains

Oti who wants to become an international journalist is happy that URCS has come out to support them. Oti stays with both her parents, who he says since his return, the parents follow him wherever he goes. "This project is very helpful.

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1. First Aid, Road safety & Emergency Helath officer Mr. Paul Okot with Kampala Central branch volunteers carrying a dead body at an NSSF building whose wall collapsed while under construction.



2. A cross section of youth members during the election of members of the National Youth Council in Mukono.

3. URCS representatives to the Pan African Conference (October 19-23, 2008) L-R Mr. Shaban Mawanda-Risk Reduction Officer/Federation Youth member, Ms. Catherine Ntabadde -Public Relations Officer, Mr. Tom Buruku-Chairman Central Governing Board, Mr. Michael Nataka-Acting Secretary General and Mr. Hannington Segirinya-Chairman National Youth Council.



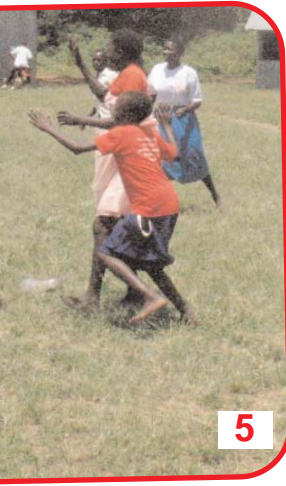
4. Volunteers of Mukono branch distributing emergency relief items to students of Seeta High School. One of the dormitories at the school caught fire.

5. Former abducted children in Lira district playing netball as part of the URCS psychosocial programme in Northern Uganda. The programme entails extra curriculum activities which includes games to refresh their minds.



6.Kinkizi link Music, Dance and Drama members perform to communities in Rukungiri branch.

Reaching out to those in need



Rukungiri Branch

Rukungiri holds youth fan fellowship

By Cadet Benjamin

RUKUNGIRI Branch held a youth fan fellowship in which over 300 youths from 10 links participated.

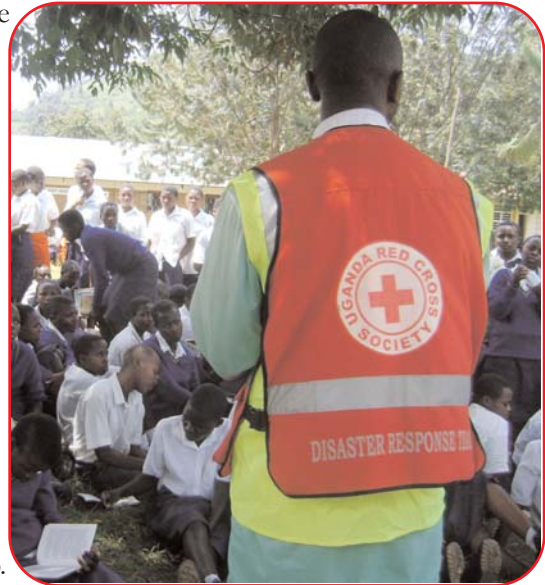
The purpose of the fellowship was to promote friendship among the youth in Rukungiri and Kanungu districts through music, dance, drama, poem and comedy.

The branch youth music group also participated in the festival and emerged the best performers of the day. The Rukungiri out of school link emerged the best in drama while the Karoli Lwanga and North Kigezi

nursing schools emerged the best in music. The best individual performance was from Ayume from Makobore High school youth link.

The activity took place at St Gerald's School in Rukungiri town.

The Rukungiri Branch Field Coordinator, Mr. Benjamin Cadet, urged the youth to always adhere to the Red Cross principles. All the participating links agreed to participate again in the fellowship.



Rukungiri Branch field coordinator Mr. Cadet Benjamin disseminating to Nyakabugo girls students in Rukungiri

Red Cross Psychosocial project changing lives

From page 7

I have received a lot of information from the volunteers and the counselling sessions have made a difference in my life. The counselling has enabled me get used to the communities and continue enjoying my life as a child. I play football and volleyball with other Red Cross children in the project," Otiti says.

He is very excited to have received a URCS t-shirt with words, **"Promoting our children's potential through psychosocial support."** All the children and parents/guardians under the project have received t-shirts. Akao and Otiti want the project to be implemented for a long time because many children have been traumatised by the war.



Otiti (in white shirt) digging with a brother at their home garden.

Maurice Okori, 16, a former child soldier with the rebels says the psychosocial project has equipped him with skills to communicate with others and also be able to live a normal life and forget about the past. Okori was abducted and turned into a child soldier of the LRA. He however did not want to surrender when the UPDF surrounded him. He decided to run upon seeing the Ugandan Army. The UPDF pursued him until he surrendered and was returned home. Okori insists she wants to be a soldier but with the right army and not the rebels. Okori helps his family with chores at home.

According to the Branch Field Coordinator URCS Lira Branch Mr. Albino Odongo, the war has had many negative impacts on the community where the population was displaced. "The mind of the children and adults changed due to the change in environment, culture and social behaviour," Odongo says.

The Programme Officer Community Development Mr. Alex Ssimbwa says the project implementation will be reviewed to assess the effects and impact of the current approach URCS is using.

The project empowers guardians/parents of the project children to start up income generating activities in groups, according to Ssimbwa.

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Harm Reduction/Drug Abuse

URCS staff trained in harm reduction



Participants during the Harm Reduction training at the Villa Maraini centre in Rome.

By Catherine Ntabadde

Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) is among the 5 African National Societies that have benefited from the 12th Harm Reduction Training by Italian Red Cross (IRC) and Fondazione Villa Maraini. Fondazione Villa Maraini was set up in 1976 as a joint venture with the Italian Red Cross by Dr. Massimo Barra, President Italian Red Cross.

The training is part of the activities to kick start URCS' engagement in Harm Reduction program. Other national societies that participated in the training are Kenya Red Cross Society, Tanzania Red Cross Society, Botswana Red Cross Society and Mauritius Red Cross Society. URCS was represented by Mr. Prosper Byonanebye (HIV/AIDS National Programme Officer), Mr. Levi Byaruhanga (Programme Officer-Youth and Volunteer Management), Ms. Catherine Ntabadde (Public Relations Officer), Ms. Juliet Kiyimba (Branch Field Coordinator-Kampala North) and Mr. George Nkugwa (Branch Field Coordinator-Kampala East).

Participants were taken through:

Who drug users are; Street drugs; Clinic service; TB and HIV/AIDS in drug users; The IFRC Global Alliance; Objectives in Harm reduction; The outreach work; Why drug users share injections?; Why do many governments not want to run Harm Reduction Programmes.

The team had a chance to visit and check out the services Italian Red Cross is running as part of its Harm Reduction Programme. At Villa Maraini, drug addicts are given a new life through drug rehabilitation therapies. The services include residential and outpatient services in addition to running two 'camper vans' where drug addicts are given new syringes, a move aimed at reducing HIV/AIDS infections among drug users.

As a way forward from the training, all National Societies represented were tasked to incorporate harm reduction programs in their running programmes.

URCS' Secretary General Mr. Michael Nataka is optimistic that taking on harm reduction programme will increase URCS' operations, hence continuing to reach out to a specific vulnerable group in Uganda, the drug users.

In July, Uganda Red Cross was privileged to host the Eastern and Southern conference on Humanitarian Drug Policy in Entebbe. The meeting was the second conference to be organized for the African region following the Rome Consensus. The first meeting was held in December 2007 in Cape Verde for the West and Central African regions.



Disseminating to students in Kamuli.



A delegate at the 7th Pan African Conference visiting a URCS exhibition stall in Johannesburg.

Entebbe Branch

Entebbe embarks on construction of office building

By Hasifa Kabejja

ENTELEE branch has started constructing an office building on the land that was offered to it by Entebbe Municipal council. The plot of land is located on Barkley Road, Plot 1A in Entebbe Municipality.

The branch is currently housed at the Entebbe Grade A Hospital.

The office building that is estimated to cost Shs550 million, will house a restaurant, accommodation apartments, canteen, public clinic and a conference hall to act as income generating projects for the branch to reduce donor dependency.

Speaking at the groundbreaking/fundraising ceremony on 11th October, the Uganda Red Cross Society Central Governing Board Chairman, Mr. Tom Buruku, paid tribute to the Entebbe Branch members, particularly the Branch Governing Board (BGB) Chairman, Mr. Mohammed Kawuma, for their efforts in acquiring the land.

He also thanked Entebbe Municipal council for accepting to offer land to the branch.

"When the branch had just started, activities were not regular, but now the branch has advanced since there are a variety of activities going on in the area and therefore the need for the Red Cross to be around to manage disasters. Accidents can't be ruled out as many people keep coming to the area to have fun at the various beaches.

Entebbe Road is

also the main route to

the airport," Mr.

URCS CGB Board Chairman Mr. Buruku laying the foundation for Entebbe branch office.

Buruku said.

The first phase of the building will

cost Shs44 million and it is expected to end next month. If all goes well, the branch will shift to the new premises next month.

During the ceremony, a variety of items including art crafts were auctioned to fundraise for the building. Shs950,000 was raised in cash and Shs2 million in pledges from contributions made by the area residents including the BGB Chairman, Mr. Kawuma, the Managing Director of Kisubi Studio, Tusetukirewamu Women Group and students and teachers of Entebbe Parents School.

The Head of Human Resource, Ms. Esther Ssekiziyivu, who represented the Secretary General, said the branch had been given a motorcycle to ease transport.

URCS school links in Entebbe and the Branch Governing Board members. Students treated guests to various traditional dances. and plays.



Youth

By Charles Nsamba

National Youth Council elect leaders

UGANDA Red Cross Society youth recently elected new members to the National Youth Council (NYC) executive for the period 2008-2010. The election took place during the Youth Annual General Meeting at the National Agricultural Research Organization center in Mukono.

Mr. Hannington Segirinya was re-elected the National Youth Council Chairman while Ms. Aguminitwe Apophia from Bushenyi was elected the new vice chairperson and female representative to the Central

Governing Board (CGB).

Speaking at the function, the Acting Secretary General, Mr. Michael Nataka, challenged the youth to always develop ideas that propel the National Society to the next level.

Mr. Nataka revealed that the URCS management and the board are in the process of acquiring 15 more acres of land next to the National youth center in Mukono. The land will be for the youth projects.

The CGB Chairman, Mr. Tom Buruku, commended the youth for their efforts towards improving the National Society.

"Uganda Red Cross is what it is because of the energies of young people like you. You have always been our strength in our operations to mitigate human suffering especially in times floods, Ebola and cholera outbreaks and other emergencies," he said. The meeting was attended by over 90 youth leaders from the 50 Red Cross branches.

Mbale Region

Mbale Region coordinating disasters in Eastern Uganda

By Charles Nsamba

In 2007, Eastern Uganda emerged as the most disaster affected area, as a result of the floods occurrence. The region has continued to experience other disasters like the armed incursions, landslides and internal displacements.

Through all this, Uganda Red Cross Society has taken the lead in helping the situation, through its nationwide branch network and committed volunteer base to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable. URCS through its Mbale region in particular has been very instrumental in coordinating disaster management activities within the region.

During the national contingency planning meeting held recently at the Office of the Prime Minister in Kampala, Uganda Red Cross was assigned the task of conducting pre floods assessment and monitoring progress of anticipated occurrence of floods during the period September-November 2008. Seven Branch Field Coordinators and 36 volunteers were

trained for this task and an assessment was conducted in seventeen districts of Karamoja and Teso sub regions. It was revealed that over 163,862 households were at high risk, in case this disaster occurred again.

Under the floods recovery programme



One of the distribution exercises.

which has just ended, URCS with support from its partners constructed 7, 191 floods resistant huts in Katakwi and Amuria districts. As part of the shelter strategy, a total of 20,000 tree and fruit seedlings were distributed in Amuria and Katakwi in targeted schools and households and this was geared towards the establishment of woodlots, environmental protection,

food security economic security, fuel and future construction purposes.

In the area of health, the Disaster Management and Health and Care departments worked closely to ensure promotion of hygiene within the region, following a recent cholera outbreak in Pallisa, Mbale and Tororo. A total of 147 community volunteers have been trained to sensitize the communities about good sanitation practices. Further still, Red Cross sensitization materials have been distributed among the communities to educate them about proper hygiene.

Uganda Red Cross image has improved as a result of the Society's contribution towards alleviating the suffering of the most vulnerable in the communities. This was noted during the regular stake holders' coordination meetings with district authorities in the various branches within Mbale region. This has further helped to strengthen the partnership and networks with the government and other stakeholders, particularly in the field of disaster management.

OBITUARY



The late Abdul. Masaba

NOVEMBER 17, 2008 was a very sad day for the Uganda Red Cross family. Uganda's road carnage did not spare one of its dedicated staff, Mr. Abdul Masaba. Masaba was the programme officer for Immunisation and Malaria Control at the headquarters.

Mr. Masaba died in a road accident at Bulyatante on Jinja road, after Lugazi when a Mbale bound bus collided with a truck loaded with cement.

He joined URCS in 1994 as Programme Assistant of Mbale Red Cross Division. In 1997, he was appointed Branch Field Coordinator, Mbale. In 1999, Masaba became the Blood Donor Recruitment Regional Field Officer Mbale and later on Jinja region before he joined headquarters in 2005.

May his soul rest in eternal peace.

Kampala-Vocational Award Board Chairman wins Rotary Award

By Catherine Ntabadde

The Rotary Club of Kivatule has awarded Mr. Tom Buruku, Uganda Red Cross Society Board chairman the 2008 Vocational Award.

The President of the club Ms. Cathy Nassali said Rotary clubs select and award a deserving personality in their local communities who use their vocation in an exemplary manner in the areas of mankind.

"It is from the above that the board of the Rotary Club of Kivatule considered you among the best candidates who would suit the ideals mentioned. The club assembly duly endorsed the board's decision and agreed that you be awarded the 2008 Vocational Service Award for making

Dreams Real for the world's children, in line with this Year's Rotary theme," she said.

Mr. Wycliff Mulindwa Rotary Country chair handed over the award to Mr. Buruku on

November 12, 2008 at Kabira Country Club in Kampala. Mulindwa said Rotarians use their vocations to enhance capacities of their clubs. Mr. Buruku said he has been a volunteer with Red Cross for 40 years. "It is an honour to receive such an award. I receive this award on behalf of over 200, 000 volunteers of the



Mr. Buruku CGB Board Chairman receiving award from Mr. Mulindwa as Ms. Nassali looks on.

Uganda Red Cross," Buruku said. He told Rotarians that Uganda Red Cross Society will continue reaching out to those in need. Mr. Buruku informed guests that the Ombachi massacre in Arua, where he hails from prompted him to join the Red Cross. He lost relatives in the clashes.

Mpigi Branch

Red Cross shines at safe Motherhood Day celebrations

By Ivan Luwaga

Uganda Red Cross Society Mpigi Branch participated in the Safe Motherhood Day National Cerebrations in Buwama Sub-county on October 17, 2008.

The theme of the day was "Family Planning Promotes and Improves the Quality of Life". The occasion was presided over by the First Lady Hon Janet Museveni.

Safe Motherhood is geared to improving the health status of mothers and babies by improving key components of safe motherhood. This is achieved through education, nutrition, prenatal services, antenatal services, quality labour services, postnatal services, and other health services for conditions

such as HIV/AIDS, malaria among others.



A medical staff offering services in Mpigi

This year's cerebrations attracted over 2000 people with more than 40 exhibitors. Uganda Red Cross Society

Mpigi Branch offered First Aid and Ambulance services.

The First Aid Team comprised Red Cross First Aiders, medical staff from Nkozi Hospital, Gombe, Hospital and Mpigi Health Center.

The Branch exhibited brochures, handouts and posters about Red Cross activities and also worked with the Uganda Blood Transfusion Services (UBTS) in conducting a blood donor bleeding session. Uganda Red Cross Society tent as well hosted Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) for HIV services conducted by Gombe Hospital.

Kampala East/Lira/Apac/Arua/Luweero branches

Orphans and vulnerable children acquire tailoring skills

By Prosper Byonanebye & Catherine Ntabadde

1, 200 Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) from Uganda Red Cross branches of Kampala East, Luweero, Arua and Apac have graduated in tailoring. The graduates will receive tailoring machines and kits to start self empowerment initiatives.

75 of these are from Kampala East branch. In addition, 4,800 OVC have been supported to acquire self empowerment skills and tools in the last three years.

In 2007; 1,000 OVCs graduated in Masindi, Hoima, Nebbi and Arua. In 2006; 2600 OVC graduated in different skills from Kamuli, Kumi, Soroti, Kabeiramaido, Katakwi, Lira, Kitgum and Gulu.

Uganda Red Cross Society 3 year focus on out of school youth from child headed families; mainly due to

HIV/AIDS or war have seen 4800

OVC skilled in different specialties (tailoring, hair dressing, carpentry, bee keeping, brick laying) according to their abilities and community market feasibility for improved house hold incomes.

The selection criteria was for ages 14-17 a and in line with the 2004/2005 OVC policy, plan of action and tool kit. The community based OVC advocacy committees have played a big role in ensuring that the economic empowerment of OVC is successful undertaken.

Various testimonies of positive change in income and hope have been registered in Apac, Kitgum, Lira, Kamuli by OVC that benefited in 2006. In Lira, two mothers who were bedridden at the time have since regained their strength after accessing ARVs from Lira Hospital.

They are now engaging in productive activities. The daughter of one of the beneficiaries in Lira has also started accessing ARVs and she is

living a happy life while continuing with her studies at primary level.

Apart from economic empowerment; psycho social support (memory work & counseling) ; health programs (immunisation, malaria control; hygiene through home visits), educational support; nutritional support (home gardens; agricultural



Kampala East Branch volunteers arranging the sewing machines.

inputs); have been extended to these house holds; with the community OVC committees (PMCs), taking a lead in advisory and sustainability initiatives.

It is hoped that 2,800 OVC will acquire skills in 2009 through URCS.

Kamuli branch

Water springs constructed in Kamuli

By Charles Babiga

Uganda Red Cross through the Kamuli Branch has constructed two springs in the water and sanitation project area to reduce hygiene related infections. The springs have been constructed in Buduuli village in Kisozi Sub County and Bulondo A village in Nyawango Sub County. The project area covers Bugulumbya, Kisozi and Nyawango sub counties.

The branch has also trained 20 Participa

tory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation groups in water and sanitation and hygiene promotion. The groups are conducting hygiene sensitization sessions in the project area.

URCS started the water and sanitation project in 2007 after realizing that the area had low water coverage. From the assessment conducted by Uganda Red Cross, a village has only two water

sources.

The assessment also showed that community members didn't know that poor water sanitation and hygiene were a source of ill health, poverty and economic distress.

In addition, a total of 1,200 mosquito nets have also been distributed in the project area to prevent malaria among residents and social mobilization for routine immunization has been conducted in 18 sub counties including Kidera, Bugaya, Buyende and Kigulu.

Shelter Fund

Internally Displaced returnees to get shelter

By Hasifa Kabejja

Uganda Red Cross Society plans to support 800-1,000 households of internally displaced people with flood resistant houses. The districts to benefit include Kitgum, Pader and Gulu. The National Society through its fundraising drives like the Golf Tournament, the MTN Marathon and the Annual Fundraising Dinner that was held on 15th November, hopes to raise Shs300 million for the construction of modest homes at Shs370,000 each. This will give returning mothers, their children, orphans and the elderly the basic social security to enable them get on with life.

Speaking at the Annual Fundraising Dinner that was held under a theme "donate a house, prepare for disaster", the Chairman Central Governing Board, Mr. Tom Buruku, commended the government for ensuring that there is peace in the north to enable the return of internally displaced people to their homes after 20 years of the Lord's Resistance Army insurgency.

He also thanked URCS partners and corporate organizations for their support toward the National Society's activities. "I am hopeful that through the good partnership, we shall be able to build capacity to respond to disasters," he said.

A number of organizations made contributions in cash and kind towards the shelter fund. Several items including an art piece and Liverpool T-shirts were auctioned during the dinner to raise funds for the shelter initiative. Mr. Buruku said the National Society will set up a disaster centre to train people to manage disasters. He

assured partners and representatives of corporate organizations that donations reach recipients. He said URCS received a certificate of good accountability.

The Secretary General, Mr. Michael Richard Nataka, said vulnerabilities continue and keep changing and this requires a concerted effort to mitigate their impact. He appealed to the partners to continue supporting URCS to enable it meet its objectives.

The First Lady in a speech read by the Prime Minister commended URCS for its selfless work. "How many times have we watched on screens from the comfort of our lounges, vehicles bearing the indelible Red Cross and Red Crescent speeding through crossfire, to save lives of people they have never seen from the battle fronts?, she questioned.

Mrs. Museveni said the desire of URCS is to ensure that people affected by disasters are helped to regain normal life by constructing houses for them and providing other forms of relief, but the task is overwhelming, hence the appeal to people of good will to work with it.

"All of us prayed and agonized for almost two decades over the war in the North. We watched with incredulity the kind of pain human beings could inflict on one another with impunity. So our relief and gratitude to God for ending the atrocities need to go beyond signs and words into tangible action," she said.

She thanked the URCS partners and corporate organizations for the relentless support in the alleviation of human suffering.



The Prime Minister Rt. Hon Nsibambi autographing an expressive live painting during the dinner.

Road Safety

Mubende Sub Branch paints zebra crossing



Volunteers of Red Cross Mubende Sub Branch paint a zebra crossing along Main Street in Mubende Town Council. Mubende sub branch is under Mityana URCS branch.

MTN Marathon

10, 800 Ugandans participate in marathon to raise funds for charity

By Hasifa Kabejja

They again turned up in big numbers to run for fun but with the intent of raising funds for the most vulnerable in the north and eastern parts of the country.

A total of 10,800 people participated in the 2008 MTN marathon up from 6,000 last year which is an indication of increased awareness about the vulnerabilities in the country that need to be addressed through a concerted effort.

MTN has again chosen to give the proceeds of the marathon to Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) in support of the National Society's Mama Bag project aimed at aiding expectant mothers in the east and north with safe delivery kits. URCS offered first aid services including

ambulances during the marathon.

The Mama Bag kit contains cotton wool, gauze rolls, razor blades, plastic sheet, a cotton receiving sheet, toilet soap, safety pin for nappies, cord ligature, nappies, plastic lined baby panties, vaseline for baby, baby powder, baby towel, early baby cotton clothes, baby cotton sleeping sheet, treated mosquito net and basin among others.

Due to the floods last year, Uganda Red Cross Society upgraded the Mama Bag kit to include a return kit to enable returning families replant. The return kit contains maize seeds, beans, dodo, okra, onions, egg plants, sukuma wiki, sickles, an axe, hoes and a panga.

URCS plans to aid 2,000 expectant mothers from the 2008 proceeds.

Last year, URCS supported 2, 500 mothers in Pader, Amuria and Katakwi districts.



Mr. Buruku handing over trophies

Addressing participants, the Chairman, Central Governing Board, Mr. Tom Buruku, said the funds would be used for the right cause. He commended MTN for teaming up with URCS to address vulnerabilities in the country.

Kisoro/Kanungu branches

Over 30, 000 Congolese refugees cross to Uganda

By Hasifa Kabejja and Catherine Ntabadde

Uganda Red Cross Society is distributing relief items to Congolese refugees at Matanda and Nyabikande transit sites in Kanungu and Kisoro district respectively.

So far, 2, 500 households have received items including blankets, tarpaulins, basins, jerrycans and soap. URCS has been entrusted by all NGOs in the operation to head the distribution exercise of food and non food items. UNHCR is the overall coordinating agency in Kisoro and Kanungu.

The National Society is also undertaking the registration of all Congolese refugees at the transit sites and in Nakivale resettlement camp where the refugees are re-located.

It is also sensitizing communities on proper hygiene and sanitation practices and offering first aid services. More refugees continue to trickle into the country from different border points including Ishasha in Kanungu, Kisoro and Chetero. This calls for concerted effort to mobilize resources to address vulnerabilities of over 30, 083 Congolese refugees who have been forced to live their country due to fighting between the government forces and rebel Laurent Nkunda's soldiers.

UNICEF has set up water tanks to ensure distribution of safe water to refugees. Medicines San Frontiers (MSF) is providing water in Kisoro and medical treatment in Nakivale where a cholera outbreak has been reported. WFP is providing food in Kanungu, Kisoro and Nakivale.



Uganda Red Cross volunteers sticking identification tags on refugees before boarding a bus to Matanda transit camp.

Some Congolese URCS talked to said they are not ready to return home in fear of rebel Laurent Nkunda's forces while others are returning on claims that rebels have assured them of safety. URCS operations are supported by IFRC.



IFRC Disaster Management delegate Brennan Banks working with URCS volunteers during the distribution of items to Congolese refugees



The seven fundamental principles of the Red Cross Movement

Humanity

The Red Cross movement aims at providing assistance to the vulnerable without discrimination to prevent & alleviate human suffering. Its purpose is to protect life & health and to ensure respect for human dignity. The movement also promotes mutual understanding & lasting cooperation among all people.

While national societies are auxiliaries to their governments in the provision of humanitarian services & subject to the laws of their respective countries, they should maintain their autonomy.

Voluntary Service

As a humanitarian organisation, it is a voluntary relief movement, not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Impartiality

The Red Cross does not discriminate. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals being guided by their needs and giving priority to the most urgent cases.

Unity

There can only be one Red Cross or Red Crescent society in any one country. It must be open to all and carry out humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Neutrality

To earn the confidence of all, the Movement takes no sides in hostilities nor does it engage in controversies of a political, social, religious or ideological nature.

Universality

The Red Cross/Red Crescent movement is worldwide. All societies have equal status and share equal responsibility in helping each other.

Independence

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