Dear reader, welcome to yet another edition of the humanitarian. This is our second release this year and has so much for you that you missed in the first release. This quarter has been an interesting one but also quite challenging. The South Sudan refugee operation has been and remains our major humanitarian response of the quarter. This has taken on every one’s attention since it is a major challenge to not only URCS but has a big impact on the resources of the Country. Uganda Red Cross is also under going change and strategically repositioning or better service delivery.

We have partnered with other agencies to ensure good service delivery as well as positioned our staff and volunteers to handle the change. I therefore invite you to read this piece for you to appreciate our operations and new strategic move we are taking as an Organisation. Enjoy the edition.
Hello friends,

Welcome to this edition of our quarterly newsletter. In this release, we bring you apprises about the National society and the strategic issues pertaining to our operations. It is my pleasure to inform you that our Strategic plan 2020 is ready for rolling out. Our regional consultative meetings ended in August 2016 and today, we have the new business modelled strategy which will guide operations for the next four years. The recovery process is in its final stages of consolidation. We have a brand new senior management team complimented by a deliberately composed spectrum of operational staff. The URCS constitution and all policies related to Branch management, membership and volunteering have been repackaged to meet the requirements of URCS unique identity and mandates.

As the saying goes, “what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger,” Uganda Red Cross has gone through a number of pitfalls. However, these were wake up calls for the National Society to re-invent itself. The new leadership has used the challenges to turn around the national society. The changes are for the better and stronger national society. We have new senior management team, new strategy and rejuvenated passion exhibited by staff and board, ready to take Uganda Red Cross to glory.

As we come towards the end of the year, we take time to reflect back at the journey so far treaded. We wouldn’t have made it without support from our partners, members, volunteers, and staff. I thank you for your support, efforts and team work exhibited all the way.

I also take this opportunity to invite you to read this new piece of our newsletter and catch up with the latest updates of our operations, strategic insights and usual humanitarian support to the vulnerable communities where we work.

Cheers!

Robert Kwesiga
SECRETARY GENERAL
URCS CONCLUDES POLICY REVIEWS

In August 2016, Uganda Red Cross concluded the regional consultative meetings. These involved consultations from all stakeholders on the new strategic plan, branch policy, Youth policy, volunteer and membership policies as well as guidelines pertaining to the general operations of URCS.

The process was done with support from consultants who volunteered their time, expertise and skills to ensure that the national society goes through this important phase of change. These documents will be officially approved by the National council and implementation will kick start by end of 2016. We want to thank whoever made a contribution / input to the completion of the review of these documents.
Dr. Michael Edgar Muhumuza, a consultant neurosurgeon at Mulago hospital, according the Daily Monitor of July 7, 2016, says that 80% of the patients suffering from a number of conditions such as brain tumors, congenital abnormalities and trauma are victims of boda boda accidents. Given this rate of “bodaboda” accidents, the Uganda Red cross Society has taken the initiative to train “bodaboda” cyclists under an umbrella organization named as safe “boda”. In this project, “boda boda” cyclists are trained on road safety and first aid. Among those trained is Samuel Katumba, a cyclist in Rubaga along Nabunya road.

Samuel is a 26 year old father of one who currently depends on income from his “boda boda”. He found out about safe boda in 2014 from his Red Cross branch, Kampala west, where he is a member. He admired safe boda because of the way they look/dress but feared to join at first as he wanted to first learn more about it. He joined a year later and since then, he didn’t turn back. He has noticed a difference in his profession ever since he joined safe boda. People respect him because he looks smart and he conducts himself in a professional way. The training helped him know how best he can use the road as well as respecting other road users. “I have never been involved in any accident since I joined safe boda and I cannot find an injured person and I fail to help. I know what to do.” He says.

Many of his fellow cyclists admire the way he conducts himself, dresses and does his job as a safe “boda” practitioner. Samuel used to be shabby before. He also got involved in two accidents and he didn’t know how to interpret road signs. The story is now different. Samuel blames many of the “boda boda” accidents on carelessness of the riders and also the drugs that they use. “Many of them take a lot of drugs and are never sober enough to ride safely”. He adds. While interviewing other cyclists, it came out clearly that most of them work day and night and only take off two hours to rest on their boda bodas under a shade. This fatigues them hence dozing at work. Samuel encourages his fellow colleagues to become Red Cross volunteers. This will give them a chance of being trained in first aid and road safety which will make them better at their job as well as having it as a life skill.
Uganda Red Cross handed over an ambulance to Manafwa local government in August 2016. This was handed over by Mr. Naphtali Baguma, the head of supply and procurement at Uganda Red Cross Society. This was witnessed and received by a delegation from Manafwa local government, represented by Mr. John Musira, the LC5 chairperson of the district. In 2014, the Uganda Red Cross Society signed a partnership agreement with the Red Cross Society of China under the integrated community resilience program which was intended to build the resilience and capacity of the local people in Manafwa to be able to respond to their own emergencies. As part of this program, the Red Cross Society of China gave an ambulance as in-kind support to the Manafwa district and this ambulance was received by Uganda Red Cross in August 2015 to support the program.

URCS officially handed the ambulance to the district after 2016 elections and this was after electing substantive leaders in office who would take up the responsibility of handling district resources. A couple of guidelines on how to use the ambulance were given to the district to ensure that the ambulance is managed well and in-line with ICRC guidelines.

While handing over the ambulance, Mr. Baguma emphasized “the vehicle is registered as the property of the Uganda Red Cross and it has only been given out for 36 months. The district driver has been subjected to a mandatory driving test to ensure that his capacity to drive this type of vehicle is not doubted. It is still new and in good condition so the district is expected to take good care of it. Also, URCS will continue monitoring the usage of this ambulance to ensure that it is used for the right purpose and operates within the policies of URCS”.

Speaking to the media during the hand over, John Musira, the LC5 chairperson of Manafwa district thanked the Uganda Red Cross Society for the support given to Manafwa district and appreciated the good partnership URCS has with the Red Cross Society of China. “We thank you for considering Manafwa as your community of choice because we have had many challenges including the landslides which affected our people in Bududa. This ambulance will help us as we respond to the needs of the people during emergencies. We request that you maintain the good relationship with the China Red Cross so that we continue serving the local people.” He also added that the ambulance will be of great use especially to mothers in labor who cannot get to the health centers on their own since most communities in Manafwa are very remote and health facilities are quite far.
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Blood remains a scarce resource in many hospitals and therefore calls for combined efforts to mobilize it in a bid to save lives. Uganda Red Cross has a role of mobilizing blood donors in the country. On 27th August, 2016, the Uganda Red Cross Society received a delegation from China who had come to explore opportunities of partnership with the Uganda Red Cross Society to support blood donor recruitment. The delegation was led by Wang Rupeng, the Vice president of the Red Cross society of China, Liu Xuanguo, the Vice chairperson of the Chinese foundation among others.

Much as they have been partners before, the partnership is being shifted from emergency response support to blood transfusion services. The delegation visited the URCS- Jinja branch to pilot the project. While addressing the team in Jinja Wang Rupeng, the vice chairperson of the Red Cross Society of China thanked the Uganda Red Cross Society for the good partnership and also promised to continue supporting URCS activities.

In Uganda today, nearly 50% of inpatient deaths among children under-five are attributed to malaria which causes severe anemia. Therefore, 50% of all blood collected in Uganda is used to treat these children. Haemorrhage contributes to 34% to all maternal deaths in Uganda hence 30% of donated blood is used to save lives of pregnant women with complications of pregnancy and child birth, including Haemorrhage and malaria-induced anemia.
The visit was graced by Robert Kwesiga, the URCS secretary general, Ms. Sarah Mutegombwa, the blood donor recruitment program manager, the Chairperson of the URCS central governing board, the chairperson of the Jinja branch governing board, the Jinja branch manager, other board members and volunteers of URCS with Jinja branch, members of the fourth estate, representatives from partners like the Uganda blood transfusion services and Ministry of health among others.

While speaking to the teams in Jinja at a blood donation drive, the URCS Secretary General thanked China Red Cross delegation for supporting URCS in this blood cause. “Thank you our partners from China for showing readiness to work with us on this great cause. Uganda needs 340,000 units of blood which our volunteers can raise if we are well coordinated. With your support, we can make this blood program better and raise the required units of blood and save lives of Ugandans.” Kwesiga emphasized.

**SYNERGY PROJECT - LIVELIHOODS**

“**AMANI WAGHE NABHIKIREWO**

*Story by Milton Muyibuga – Focal person – Synergy project Bundibugyo*

This is a Rukonzo statement meaning “I have saved my energy”. Janet Biira, 25 year old mother of three stays in Busamba 111 village – Bundibugyo District in western Uganda. She uses the statement to refer to the energy saving stove, which she got to know about from the Uganda Red Cross Society under the synergy-climate change adaptation project. Under this project, the URCS is training people to make energy saving stoves. People in rural areas use firewood as a source of fuel to cook their food, and yet cutting down trees is dangerous to the environment. This stove is environmentally friendly as it uses less firewood. These stoves have been piloted in 60 households so far in Bundibugyo, and more families are expected to be reached with the same technology. In a bid to establish self-sustaining families, URCS has trained more people to make such stoves. Over 48 trainers of trainees have been trained to equip others with the same skills and it is believed that more communities will adopt this method and save the environment. This is with support from BRC-Flanders.

Janet stays with other 9 people in her home. She is a primary four drop out and separated with her husband in May, 2015. She has always struggled as a single mother. She uses an energy saving stove to cook food for the people she lives with. Previously, Janet was using the three traditional stones to cook food but when the Uganda Red Cross synergy project started in Busamba parish, she was able to construct an energy saving stove which she uses now to cook food for her people.

“Before I got the energy saving stove, I would use a lot of fire wood which I collect from the mountain. Every month, I would use 8 bundles, but these days I use not more than three bundles per month. I collect fire wood from Mbatya valley which is about 4 kilometers away from my home. I use less energy, less force and I have time to do a lot more than before” she adds.

Janet’s children used to go to school very late since she had to warm their food in the morning. Today, life is good. She leaves the food on the stove in the night and finds it warm in the morning. This has also helped her to attend to other home chores other than warming the food in the morning.

Before, Janet would spend 50,000= on fire wood per month but these days if she doesn’t go to the mountains to collect fire wood, she uses about 20,000= per month, meaning she saves more than a half of what she was spending before she constructed the energy saving stove.
Janet does not have to worry about accidents in the kitchen anymore, because the energy saving stove is safe enough. “Whenever I would leave children cooking in the kitchen, I would be worried all the time because I would think that may be my child would be burnt because the fire in between the three stones is so much exposed and can easily lead to accidents in the kitchen. With the energy saving stove, they feel safer. She also adds that food cooked on the energy saving stove has a good flavor because smoke does not enter into it directly.

Janet wishes that all people in her village would have energy saving stoves so that many trees can survive in her parish and in that way, landslides can be reduced since the vegetation/tree cover would not decrease so much. She calls upon all her village mates to construct the energy saving stove for its associate.

Lutheran World Relief Donates Items Worth 800,000,000 Million to Uganda Red Cross Society.

By Irene Nakasiita – PR & Communications Coordinator

Lutheran World Relief (LWR) handed over items worth 250,000 USD (Approx. UGX 800,000,000) to Uganda Red Cross Society. The donations that included 160 Bales of Blankets and 220 cartons of school kits were handed over to the Secretary General of the Red Cross at their offices in Rubaga in August 2016.

The donation came at a time when Uganda is facing an influx of refugees and asylum seekers fleeing conflict in South Sudan. It has been reported that over 299,000 South Sudanese refugees displaced by violence crossed the border into Uganda in July, according to Andreas Needham the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) agency spokesman. The agency noted that over 2000 South Sudanese arrive in Uganda each day. This crisis has severely stretched the capacity of Uganda’s refugee centres and constrained the country in terms of providing social services, food, health, education, water and sanitation services to the refugees and therefore any help accorded by donors goes a long way in making a huge impact to the refugees.

While addressing the press during the handover of the items at the Uganda Red Cross offices in Rubaga, Kenneth Barigye, the Lutheran World Relief Country Director said, “We at Lutheran are happy that we are able to contribute even so little to help make the lives of those fleeing violence a little better away from their homes.”

According to Robert Kwesiga, the Secretary General-Uganda Red Cross Society, these donations will benefit the refugees surviving in refugee Camps in Yumbe & ‘Adjumani. “Many refugees who recently moved from South Sudan are camping in the different settlements, and they need our support. More so, we have shifted some to Yumbe to decongest the settlements in Adjumani. These donations we believe will benefit especially those recently shifted since they are in a more-hard to reach area, and as they settle in, we hope to distribute these items to them to enable them live a fairly decent life.”

Since 1985, LWR has been working with local partners in Uganda to address the root causes of poverty and improve the livelihoods of people in the community. “In making this donation to The Red Cross, we continue with our work of trying to improve the lives of people. We hope these items will provide emergency relief and support the camp's crowded schools and health centres.” Said Barigye.

“The scholastic materials will support children as they enroll in schools next term. Thank you LWR, and we pray that more partners will come on board and trust us with more resources to meet the needs of these vulnerable people,” Kwesiga said.

Each school kit donated by Lutheran World Relief had:

- 470-sheet notebooks, 8 in. x 10.5 in. (20 cm x 26.5 cm)
- pair of blunt scissors
- 130-centimeter ruler
- 1 pencil sharpener
- 5 new, unsharpened pencils with erasers
- 5 ballpoint pens
- 1 eraser, 2.5 inches (6.35 cm)
- 1 box of 16- or 24-count crayons
- 1 cloth drawstring back
Robert Kwesiga – URCS SG (L) addressing the media together with Mr. Kenneth Barigye - LWR Country Director.

SOCIAL MOBILISATION FOR BETTER HEALTH

URCS-UNICEF Activate WASH Interventions to Save Families from Cholera in Budaka District, Eastern Uganda.
By Irene Nakasiita – URCS Communications & PR Coordinator

The Uganda Red Cross Society in partnership with UNICEF Uganda have activated Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) promotion interventions to save lives of people, following the outbreak of cholera in many rural communities in Eastern Uganda. The affected districts include Budaka, Iganga, Namayingo, Sironko, Butaleja and Tororo in Eastern Uganda.

Asan Kigenyi, 50 years old, and his wife Jalia Nalongo, 40 years are residents of Nankone village in Budaka Town Council. They had 12 children but 3 died in the initial stages of the cholera outbreak in June, 2016. The trio were buried on the same day, at the same burial ground. The death of his three children has since left Kigenyi in unexplainable pain. “I have lived life the same way all my life, but the death of my three children has made me change a lot. I am now very strict because from what I have tested, it is true, Cholera is real!” Kigenyi and Jalia are peasant farmers; they grow maize and ground nuts for domestic consumption and sometimes sell off some to raise income to meet other basic needs like paraffin and soap. For all their life, they had never planned to save any money to support them in case of an emergency. When Kigenyi sells anything, he uses the money to buy local brew. Kigenyi dreads the day the tragedy happened. Recalling in pain, he says that his deceased children had diarrhea, vomiting, red eyes and they couldn’t eat anything.

He had no money to take them to the nearest health centre, leave alone the hospital! However, when the situation worsened, the neighbors rushed them to a clinic where they were feared to have contracted cholera. They were referred to Budaka Health Center IV, where they were put in the cholera isolation center. The medical team tried their best, but it was too late. They passed on!

Dr. John Matovu, the District Health Officer, noted that they have registered 194 cholera victims and out of these, 13 have died. “Cholera is a serious, acute infectious disease which affects both children and adults. It remains a global threat to public health and a key indicator of lack of social development. Roughly about 28,000 to 142,000 people die of cholera world-wide” he added.
The Uganda Red Cross Society, in partnership with UNICEF and the Ministry of Health, have activated strong WASH interventions to curb the scourge. Massive sensitization has been carried out to educate people about Cholera and how it can be prevented. IEC materials bearing behavioral change messages have been shared in languages the locals understand and intentional practical activities have been conducted to enable a “hands on experience” with the rural communities in order for them to adopt the new behavior for good health. “We have been doing community sensitizations with support from UNICEF. We have also given out tools to support families as they construct latrines as well as practice good hygiene. They have received hoes, ropes, spades, hand washing facilities, soap and water treatment tablets; we have also sent out our volunteers to individual homes to teach household members how to use these tools as well as coach them on how to maintain proper hygiene and sanitation. We want to see a cholera-free community at the end of this quarter” says Vincent Odoki, the URCS Branch Manager Budaka sub-region.

Kigenyi’s family was among those reached in Budaka Town Council. Special focus was put on constructing a latrine, plate stand, hand washing facility (tippy tap), and the general hygiene at home, which was poor. The family received a jerrycan, water treatment tablets, tools for digging a latrine, cholera-related literature and they were taught how to live in a clean environment in order for them to remain healthy.

On a daily basis, before going to the garden, Jalia cleans her house, outdoor kitchen, compound and leaves her home tidy. “I am the wife in this home and now take lead in hygiene promotion for my people to be safe. I don’t want to lose any more people” she smiles. Kigenyi has grown old and weak. He delights in seeing his younger children grow to support him in future when he can’t work anymore. He has so much hope that if they are to die, it won’t be due to cholera. “We are taking hygiene seriously so that we raise these children into healthy people who will support us as we grow older. My healthy children will look after me. We will not die of cholera because we now know its cause and how we can avoid it”, he adds.

Many families in Budaka have taken on good hygiene and sanitation practices. The Cholera treatment center in Nansanga has no cases of admission now. “We last received Cholera patients one month ago. We don’t have anyone now,” says Wilber Bunywere, the in-charge of Nansanga Health Centre III Cholera Isolation Center in Budaka District. While giving out hygiene and sanitation kits, URCS targeted homes and public places. These included health centers which receive many patients yet lack such tools. Among those supported and who now have an active WASH facility is Budaka Health Centre IV. The mothers who come for maternity services feel happy washing their hands after visiting the hospital latrine. “We missed such an important hand washing facility here. We receive about 60 mothers a day and now we are sure they won’t suffer from cholera and diarrheal diseases. Thank you Red Cross and UNICEF,” says Nasur Masaba, the in-charge at Budaka Health Center IV.

URCS Volunteers demonstrating proper hand washing skills to pregnant mothers at a health center (L) Jalia washing hands with a tippy tap donated by UNICEF through the cholera campaign.
Hang up, Keep Up Malaria campaign saving lives in Northern Uganda
By Irene Nakasiita – URCS Communications & PR Coordinator

Uganda Red Cross Society in partnership with UNICEF Uganda have embarked on a vigorous campaign to fight malaria in Northern Uganda. This followed rampant deaths in the 11 target communities of Amuru, Nwoya, Kitgum, Lamwo, Pader, Agago, Oyam, Apac, Gulu, Kole and Arua. The ministry of Health together with development partners like URCS and UNICEF could not sit back while people continued dying.

Today, the Uganda Malaria Reduction Strategic Plan 2014–2020 (UMRSP) supports universal access to Insecticide-treated nets (ITNs) through mass campaigns and routine distribution channels, including antenatal care (ANC) clinics, Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) visits, outreach distribution points, private providers, and commercial outlets all targeting vulnerable populations and ensuring that malaria is eradicated.

Despite those efforts, Uganda continued to lose many children below age 5 and pregnant mothers due to malaria. This compelled development partners (URCS in partnership with UNICEF) to enforce a malaria campaign targeting the vulnerable communities through social mobilisation. With a large network of volunteers spread all over the country, URCS deployed volunteers among whom are Village health team members who spear headed the campaign. With support from UNICEF, the malaria “hang up and keep up campaign” was launched between August to September 2016. This emphasized the hanging up of treated mosquito nets in all families to ensure no one gets malaria or dies to it.

The campaign supported local communities in understanding malaria prevention through hanging and keeping up of the long lasting insecticide Treated nets and this definitely targeted all households in the eleven affected districts in Northern Uganda with special emphasis on children less than 5 years and pregnant mothers.

“We did the malaria hand up – keep up campaign” and we found out that many people in the eleven target districts have barriers of using the Insecticide Treated Nets. Thy have fears like fire out outbreak because of lighting used (Tadoba), laziness, drunkenness, misuse of nets, ignorance, poor housing, smell of the Insecticide Treated Nets etc. all these are some of the excuses expressed by people for not using nets and hence explain partly why people die to malaria in Northern Uganda.” Says Mr. Alex Onzima, the URCS coordinator for the malaria hand up keep up campaign.

About 537 volunteers were trained and empowered with skills to continue teaching people about malaria, the dangers and how they can prevent it in the eleven target districts. Emphasis was around the causes, modes of transmission, prevention and control methods, signs and symptoms of both uncomplicated and complicated malaria. They also demonstrated to the local participants the use of mosquito nets in a home.

At the end of the training, sample visits were made by the URCS trained village health teams to sample communities where mothers were reached with malaria related literature and found them responding positively.

According to Ministry of Health, malaria in Uganda is the leading cause of death and accounts for 27% of deaths in pregnant mothers and children below 5. Such efforts by URCS, UNICEF and ministry of health are aimed at reducing these statics drastically as well as increasing knowledge on malaria prevention techniques at house hold level.
URCS Partners with other development agencies to support South Sudanese refugees in bidi-bidi camp – Yumbe

Since fighting broke out in South Sudan in July 2016, more South Sudanese refugees have continued entering Uganda fleeing violence and atrocities against humanity. This population movement has drastically increased number of south Sudanese refugees in Uganda. On a daily basis, Uganda receives about 2000 refugees from S. Sudan. Today, Uganda hosts 269,936 refugees from S. Sudan.

Many refugee settlements in Northern Uganda were gazetted to receive and accommodate refugees and this population movement has had a huge impact on the resources. The government of Uganda set up bidi-bidi settlement in Yumbe, to accommodate the overflow of refugees from other settlements. This was estimated to host about 100,000 refugees. However, as more refugees come each day, the settlement has exceeded its capacity. Resources have continued being a challenge and humanitarian agencies have become overwhelmed.

Uganda Red Cross in partnership with other agencies like office of the prime minister, UNHCR, UNICEF and IFRC have combined efforts to support the operation in Yumbe.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE – YUMBE OPERATIONS

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URCS OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES

- Ensure adequate and sustainable supply of water in Bidi bidi.
- Support the expansion and development of new zones (4&5) of bidi bidi to receive additional refugees from South Sudan.
- Register new arrivals
- Ensure that refugees have shelter and communal latrines
- Tracing services to enable family re-union
- Offer first aid as need be
URCS Partners with other development agencies to support South Sudanese refugees in Bidi-bidi camp – Yumbe

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Uganda Red Cross in partnership with other agencies like the Office of the Prime Minister, UNHCR, UNICEF, and IFRC have combined efforts to support the operation in Yumbe.

Speaking during the inter-agency meeting, Nasir Abel Fernandes, the UNHCR senior emergency coordinator, appreciated URCS for the good work being done on the ground and the good relations exhibited through the operation. “URCS has a dedicated team and their efforts in this operation are un-explainable!”

This builds on additional remarks from Robert Baryamwewigye, the settlement commander – Office of the Prime Minister who appreciated URCS and emphasized the additional role of pumping water through the new zones which URCS is bearing. “URCS has a task ahead of this operation since we have to expand to zone 4 and 5 as we host more refugees. The faster we reach Obonga, the better since we need to touch the water source which will reduce the water shortage.”

Uganda Red Cross is tasked with pumping water to ensure that refugees in this settlement do access safe water.

Robert Kwaresiga, secretary general URCS appreciated the agencies for the support extended to enable the smooth running of the operation. “URCS would not have done this alone without support from great partners like OPM, UNHCR, UNICEF and our own, the IFRC. With your continued support, our team is committed and dedicated to fulfill our mandate and deliver for the well-being of the people we are receiving from South Sudan. We pray for continued support as we together serve humanity”. Kwaresiga added.
Bidibidi
Refugee Camp - Yumbe

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