UGANDA RED CROSS INTENSIFIES EBOLA PREPAREDNESS

More stories inside

Bududa Landslides

- URCS takes relief aid to affected families
- URCS launches Emergency Appeal for support
- Bududa landslide response in Pictures
Dear readers,

I am delighted to share this third edition of the Humanitarian for the year 2018.

It is very enriching with lots of humanitarian stories picked from the communities where Uganda Red Cross Volunteers, staff and members are at the front line of saving lives. This issue, among other things, captures the efforts of volunteers who are every morning ready to screen people entering Uganda from DR-Congo for Ebola. The humanitarian faces that risk their lives to walk through communities to sensitize people about public health issues through social mobilization. It is real sacrifice; they brave the risks to ensure others are safe.

We also share stories from refugee settlements where women like Zawadi against all odds stand up to the challenges of being away from their home countries. As you go through the publication, you will find stories of refugees that were reunified with their families after a long period of separation. We bring you smiles that come with the bliss of reuniting with a loved one.

This issue also widely captures the unfortunate events of October 11th in Bududa mudslides where several lives were lost and hundreds of households crumbled. How do we help them to thrive and survive? It takes you and me to Make a contribution. Uganda Red Cross emergency response teams are still on ground. Read more and appreciate what the Red Cross does in emergencies like this and how you can become part of the response. Are you a woman, are you tired of fetching firewood, or you are fade up with the ever choking smoke that comes with conventional stoves? Aggrey Nyondwa in this issue explores the beauty of using “The Wonderbag”, a slow cooker that requires no hustles and sweat for one to have a meal ready.

And, a lot more interesting and moving stories that make us who we are, what we do and why we exist. Please enjoy the read and appreciate how Uganda Red Cross continues to save lives and promote human dignity. Thank you for choosing Uganda Red Cross as your partner of choice, always!
Note from the Secretary General

Dear colleagues and friends of Uganda Red Cross,

It is an honour addressing you through the “Humanitarian,” our quarterly News Letter.

This quarter has had the country experience two major emergencies that required immediate humanitarian lifesaving response. First was the Ebola outbreak in neighbouring DR-Congo that put Uganda on high risk and tension for immediate action. We also experienced climate change effects that resulted in mudslides that claimed lives and displaced people in Eastern Uganda—Bududa district around Mt. Elgon region. These two emergencies among others re-emphasized the role of the Red Cross globally. It takes a country that is prepared with resources (materials, people, and money) to respond to emergencies to save life and property.

The role of Uganda Red Cross in these two major emergencies has compelled us to re-embark on a long journey we started of drafting the disaster Law through the office of the Prime Minister and engaging the different stake holders that will see this dream come true in our Country, Uganda. We also started the process of revising the Uganda Red Cross Act of Parliament (Cap 57, 1964) in order to align the Act to the evolving humanitarian mandates of Red Cross. This is an on-going process and we pray that it is supported and effected.

I want to thank partners who have committed to support the Ebola preparedness and response efforts where Uganda Red Cross together with other stake holders are involved in ensuring that people crossing and entering Uganda across the different boarder points are screened for Ebola. Our engagements in these areas so far include; Surveillance, temperature Screening, hygiene promotion, community sensitization (social mobilization and risk communication), and through these we have managed to reach over 1.6 million people with the Ebola preparedness interventions. Uganda remains on high alert for Ebola and we are expanding services to reach all districts that are susceptible. We have stationed ambulances at different sites to support any emergency rescue services as need might require. We remain committed to the cause of emergency health, to save lives and promote human dignity.

We have taken lead in the Bududa landslide response since day one when our community based volunteers discovered the first bodies and rescued many. They have been present to this day. This is the true spirit of humanity that we always instigate in the people as we conduct community engagements.

Uganda Red Cross emergency team has distributed relief non-food items, offered psychosocial support to affected families, ensured that people access the information they need to keep safe. We however still need to do a lot in terms of supporting people to rebuild their lives and also cope through this trying moment, as government efforts to relocate these people take shape. At the end of this publication is a donation procedure, please support Uganda Red Cross to support Ugandans for the well-being of our vulnerable communities. In this quarter, we partook in a very successful democratic process which ended with branch elections that saw new leaders come on board. These will form the new national council from which new Central Governing Board members will be elected.

We are also under-taking a process of approving the Integrity Commission Members, new Patron as we operationalize the landmark changes in the revised Uganda Red Cross Constitution. This is a very transparent process, guided by our approved constitution and election guidelines. With the success of this, we hope to see our National Society stronger and serving the people of Uganda.

Wishing you a fruitful month.

Robert Kwesiga
SECRETARY GENERAL
Uganda Red Cross supports families affected in the Bududa landslides.

Uganda Red Cross with support from the Belgian Red Cross have supported families that were affected by the Bududa landslides recently. On 11th October 2018, heavy rains ravaged Bududa district in Eastern Uganda. River Tsuume which occupies Bukalasi sub-county (in Bududa district) burst its banks at about 2:15 pm, swept several houses, weakening the land and caused a devastating landslide which occurred up in the mountains, rolling big boulders through the villages of Naposhi, Nalutumu, Wanjenuwa, Tsuume, Lwanda, Mayika and Nalwanza. Over 700 people were affected from 139 households; with 43 registered deaths, 15 referrals and 16 people missing.

Uganda Red Cross immediately swung in action, deployed a team of 30 Volunteers, who involved in the search and rescue activities, offered on site first aid services, made referrals of the injured to hospitals, worked with police and local leaders to manage the dead, and have since been on ground to offer psycho-social support to the affected families, among other response efforts as per the Uganda Red Cross disaster preparedness and response plan.

On Sunday October 14th, Uganda Red Cross distributed relief non-food items which included jerry-cans, blankets, soap, tarpaulins, mosquito nets, water purification tabs, and kitchen sets (containing plates, cups, cooking pots/ saucepans, knives, spoons and forks).

The distribution happened on Sunday during prayers held for the victims at Bukalasi playground in Bududda. The Rt. Hon. Prime minister of Uganda Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda launched the distribution and appreciated Uganda Red Cross for always working closely with government to support affected people and save lives during such emergencies.

“Our friends in the Red Cross have always been with us, running to rescue people in such emergencies and giving a hand like they are doing today. We identify with the affected families and hope that this assistance helps them cope during this trying situation” said Hon. Ruhakana Rugunda, the Prime Minister of Uganda.

Items worth Ush 50M were given out and these included; Soap, Blankets, tarpaulins, kitchen sets, jerry cans and so on. Over 680 people benefited from the distribution.

“I lost everything. I and my brother were running a shop with motorcycle spare parts and other mechanical items. On that fateful Thursday afternoon, we heard boulders roll—
According to Irene Nakasiita, the Head Communications at Uganda Red Cross, Red Cross teams have been on ground since the incident happened and have helped compile an assessment report which guided and informed the distribution.

“The first body was discovered by one of our community volunteers working with the district search and rescue team. So we have been here from the start and will keep here with the community to ensure that they are safe. Today we are distributing relief support to the affected families as indicated by the assessment report. Our teams remain on ground to continue the search for the missing persons as well as continuous sensitization of people on issues of climate change, disaster risk reduction and offer psychosocial support during this traumatizing period” said Nakasiita.

Bududa is known among the top disaster prone areas in the country. In 2010, a similar incident happened in the same area and 100 people died, while hundreds were displaced. Government efforts to relocate people from this disaster prone area have been declared. Uganda Red Cross continues to sensitize all people in disaster prone areas. According to information from the Uganda National Meteorological authority, heavy rains are still expected in the eastern part of Uganda. The effects cannot be underestimated and emergency preparedness is very vital. This is why Uganda Red Cross comes in to prepare communities and take on urgent emergency preparedness and response plans to save lives of people.

Photo:
Ango John, 14, lost his Uncle but was happy to receive the items from Uganda Red Cross. He now stays at a nearby health centre

From page 4

ing, I was away from the shop as I watched it being smashed and washed by the rolling stones and running water. I thank the lord that my brother who was in the shop managed to run away but survived with terrible injuries that he is still nursing wounds at the hospital. The redcross people have supported us so much. With these items I have received, I can now start life afresh. The blankets will help me, kitchen sets and mosquito nets and everything here is useful. Thank you Red Cross.” said Lawrence Mlumba, one of the beneficiaries.

A big number of people remain stranded with no homes and property in this area. More bodies are expected to be found and the search and rescue teams are still digging and monitoring the river. A big number of the affected people are children. Ango John is 14 years old; he lost his uncle in the landslide. He was the only adult John stayed with. Today he stays at a nearby health center since he has no home to go to. He also benefited from the relief Uganda Red Cross distributed.

“My uncle and our house perished in the mudslides on Thursday. He is the only relative I had. I am grateful to the disaster response team who registered me for these things(relief). I at least now have where to start from. I am hosted by a good Samaritan.” said Ango.
Uganda Red Cross launches emergency appeal to raise 1.2bn shillings to support families affected in Bududa mudslide and those at risk in the neighboring districts.

1.2 Billion Shillings
Money needed to support affected families and nearby districts at risk

Following the devastating mudslide incident that claimed lives in Bududa (eastern Uganda) on 14th October 2018, Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) launched a local appeal to raise 1.2billion shillings to support families that were affected in Bududa and over 5000 people in the neighbouring districts at risk. The appeal was launched on 17th October, 2018 at the Uganda Red Cross offices in Rubaga.

According to information from the Uganda National Meteorological authority, heavy rains are still expected in the eastern part of Uganda, around Mt. Elgon region. The other districts at risk include; Namisindwa, Butalejja, and Manafwa. These battle with effects of climate change every year. While launching the appeal, the Uganda Red Cross Secretary General Mr. Robert Kwesiga appreciated the government and partners who joined efforts to immediately help the people affected in Bududa, but also emphasized that a lot more needs to be done.

“When such disasters happen in Uganda, we as Uganda Red Cross always call upon Ugandans and none Ugandans living in Uganda to stand with and support their brothers and sisters without entirely relying on the government. There is no amount of support that is enough, there is always more to be done especially for long term preparations for such occurrences.” Kwesiga said.

Considering the change in climate, heavy rains are still expected in the eastern part of Uganda and the communities at risk are predisposed to potential disasters including floods, mudslides, landslides and disease outbreaks. Support raised from this appeal will help Red Cross prepare communities and take on urgent emergency preparedness and response plans to save lives of people.

On disease outbreaks, Kwesiga emphasized that during such emergencies, diseases like cholera are most likely, given the destruction of URCS Secretary General Mr. Robert Kwesiga at the Press Conference
open water sources and poor hygiene and sanitation practices across the communities.

“Currently, people are drinking unsafe water, there are no sanitation facilities like latrines, so waste disposal is as bad as you can imagine. There is need for psychosocial support to the affected families and massive hygiene promotion in areas where latrines were washed away and open water sources contaminated.” Kwesiga said.

The appeal will support families with emergency relief non-food items, temporary shelter for displaced people, health and life saving interventions, hygiene promotion, access to safe and clean water, early warning sensitizations for communities on climate change and potential disease outbreaks, training of more disaster response volunteers, offering psychosocial support, among other immediate needs.

Uganda Red Cross continues to support vulnerable communities in Uganda. The National Society also commits to work closely with the government through the office of the Prime Minister in the anticipated relocation of families that are set to be moved to Bulambuli district.

MTN Uganda became the first corporate entity to respond to URCS emergency appeal to support families affected by the landslides, and other neighbouring districts in the elgon region that still face risk of disasters.

MTN contributed Ushs 50 million to buy non food items to support the affected families. A dummy cheque was signed and handed over to URCS Secretary General at their offices in Kololo. The Senior Manager Corporate Affairs Justin Ntabgoba appreciated URCS for taking the initiative to raise support.
Uganda Red Cross intensifies Ebola Preparedness as the risk threatens both Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

“At least about 2,000 people are screened daily at the different entry points bordering Uganda and the Democratic of Congo. This number doubles during market days as more people enter Uganda for business, or as more refugees enter Uganda from the Democratic Republic of Uganda.” Says Paul Okot Bitex – Uganda Red Cross Ebola Preparedness Response Coordinator.

On August 1st, 2018, the Ministry of Health in the Democratic Republic of Congo confirmed an outbreak of the Ebola Haemorrhagic fever in North Kivu Province and Ituri regions, about 100km west of Uganda. By September 25th, 2018, about 101 deaths had been registered in the DRC with several cases under investigations as probable.

Uganda Red Cross in partnership with the Ministry of Health in Uganda and other partners composed a task force to implement Ebola preparedness and readiness efforts to curb the epidemic from spreading into Uganda as the county continues to receive more refugees and other Nationals who keep crossing in and out of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Uganda Red Cross health response teams have been on ground to handle a number of components which include managing boarder surveillance, temperature screening of all entrants, hygiene promotion (Infection Prevention and Control), Risk Communication, sensitizations in communities and all public gatherings, psychosocial support among other activities. Uganda Red Cross also deployed 3 units of fully equipped ambulances to support any referrals for further management.

We have deployed over 180 Volunteers in the 7 districts where we are operating. These are full time and are fully involved in all activities. We are working closely with the district health teams under the Ministry of Health arrangements, we are supported by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC DREF) and other partners UNICEF, WFP and World Health Organization (WHO) who have brought on table resources and technical support in all areas. As a Country, we are ready to manage Ebola and the commitment exhibited by the task force is very commendable.

Mr. Robert Kwesiga
Secretary General URCS
Uganda Red Cross Volunteers are deployed in Kasese, Bundibugyo, Kisoro, Ntoroko, Bunyangabo, Kanungu and Kabarole districts. These boarders with the Democratic Republic of Congo in the western stretch of Uganda.

There are several Ebola Isolation centres set up to manage suspected cases. For example, in Kasese district, there is one at Bwera hospital which is managed by the Hospital leadership. The Red Cross volunteers support and compliment the efforts of the health workers.

“The basics are in place and we are ready to receive any suspects. Red Cross has trained teams that support us even if we got a confirmed case, we can manage dignified safe burials.” says Dr. Joyce Kabyanga, the In-charge of case management team Bwera Hospital in Kasese district, western Uganda.

At least about 2,000 people are screened daily at the different entry points bordering Uganda and the Democratic of Congo. This number doubles during market days as more people enter Uganda for business, or as more refugees enter Uganda from the Democratic Republic of Uganda.
URCS, UNHCR, UNICEF combine efforts to support people affected by floods in Teso region

In April 2018, floods ravaged Teso region in Eastern Uganda. The entire region was left in ruins with no food, no shelter, and other basics of life. The prolonged heavy rains washed away people’s homes, crops, destroyed roads and displaced hundreds.

From the Uganda Red Cross assessment report, over 700 families were affected. For school going children, life did not remain the same. The roads to their schools were cut off, classrooms filled with water and forced many to miss lessons.

According to residents of Abarilela Sub County in Amuria district, lives were lost and communities have struggled in all aspects.

On 17th August, Uganda Red Cross, Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), with support from UNICEF and UNHCR secured and distributed relief non-food items worth Ugx 387 million to the affected households. The one-week long distribution exercise aimed at supporting the families to cope through the period as they re-build their livelihoods.

“Today we are here to extend this sort of assistance to these affected communities. They have cried for a long time and the government appreciates the efforts made by our partners to respond. Our teams ensured to identify the most affected sub counties and households that were badly hit and we have decided to start with these ones.” Said Hon. Musa Ecweru, the State Minister Relief and disaster preparedness.

Uganda Red Cross volunteers on ground working with the district disaster management committees assessed the impact of the floods and identified the most hit areas and the affected households. It’s from this assessment that the basis of the distribution was informed.

“We are happy that we are able to support the families that were affected. We thank the partners UNHCR and UNICEF for joining hands with us through the office of the prime minister. UNICEF has offered the water purification tab (Aqua tabs) and covered the distribution costs, then UNHCR offered all the tarpaulins and blankets distributed. Our volunteers have been in these communities doing impact assessment and verification. They have also supported the affected communities since the floods hit the communities. We will continue sensitizing the communities on issues of climate change and how they can remain safe.” Said Jimmy Asea, a WASH Officer coordinating the emergency relief distribution in Teso region.
Uganda Red Cross distributed 2,000 tarpaulins to help people put up temporary shelters, 10,000 blankets and Aqua tabs for water purification. Teso region has in the past battled cholera outbreaks as a result of the floods. According to Hon. Musa Ecweru, a recent survey by the office of the prime minister indicates that 80% of the water got from the boreholes in these communities is contaminated and therefore needs to be purified to make it clean and safe for drinking.

During the distribution exercise, Uganda Red Cross wash officers held a sensitization session to demonstrate and teach the people how to use and apply the water purification tablets effectively, and how to improve sanitation. The sub county’s leadership couldn’t be happier and expressed their gratitude towards Red Cross and all the other partners for coming to their rescue. “We really thank Red Cross for what you’ve done today and what I believe are going to do in other parts of the region. The people of Abarilela have been suffering for so long following the loss of all our crops as a result of the rains. We understand that resources are never enough but there are still more affected people and our prayer is that you keep it up and expand this generosity to other remote parts of the district.” Said Michael Eluluma the sub county chairperson.

Uganda Red Cross Society was hailed for its excellent lifesaving services during the Rotary Cancer Run 2018 at Kololo airstrip on 26th August this year. The 7th edition of this run was organized by Rotary Uganda with its partners. As usual, Uganda Red Cross offered to give lifesaving services as part of the contribution towards this cause.

The countrywide rotary cancer run took place on the same day, across 33 major towns of Uganda including Kampala, Mbarara, Fort Portal, Arua, Masaka, Jinja, Ntungamo among others. The countrywide run attracted close to 30,000 runners including children, the elderly, the disabled among other unique categories of people.

“We started in 2012 and all these years, Uganda Red Cross has been with us, doing a tremendous job of offering first aid to the runners. This year is unique in a number of ways, there is more participation and enthusiasm from the runners and this means more cases that require first aid and this is where Red Cross comes in very strong. We thank Red Cross and other partners who have joined us to support this run for a life cause, beating cancer.” said Dennis Jjuuko, the Cancer Run 2018 Spokesperson.

Uganda Red Cross deployed over 40 volunteers, highly trained in administering first aid and ambulance services. The team offered massage, muscle soothing efforts, attended to a few minor injuries, offered services at water points, distributed glucose to all the participants, guided at start and finishing lines, managed stretchers, crowd control among other services. Two standby ambulances were also availed that supported referrals.

“We attended to about 900 people today and majority were muscle strains which our teams effectively handled. We provided massage and also attended to a few bruised cases. We didn’t do any referrals as there were no serious cases. Our teams were here before the event to set up, position ambulances and also went through the route with a team of first aiders. Today were here before anyone and ensured that all was set. This is one of our strengths as Red Cross and indeed we are positioned to ensure that people are safe.” said Miti Lwanga, the URCS First aid team leader.

The run raised about UGX 770 million in Kampala. The major target for the organizers was to raise UGX 1.5 Billion to build a cancer ward at Nsambya hospital. “We hope to put these fund to a noble cause, we would like to set up a cancer ward at Nsambya, a rotary blood bank, and in the long run, procure a Linear Accelerator Cancer Treatment machine which costs about UGX 18 Billion” Mr. Jjuuko added.
Meet Justine Zawadi; a 29-year-old foster mother of one. She is a Congolese refugee staying in Itambabiniga zone in Kyaka II refugee settlement in Western Uganda. She fled conflict in Congo which claimed her husband and other relatives. Before her husband’s death, Zawadi got pregnant but unfortunately the husband died before learning of this pending arrival of his first child. Zawadi also learnt of this about 3 months after his death. She then fled to Uganda to protect her pregnancy as it was the only thing left to hold on to from her late husband.

“We had a good home. We had just started staying together and the worst happened. I didn’t know I was pregnant and neither did he. Hope returned when I learnt that I was carrying his child after his death, this is why I couldn’t risk staying in Congo. I had to do whatever it takes to keep this child. It’s the only thing of his I can hold on to” she said.

On her way to Uganda, Zawadi came across a desperate young boy who was equally lost and miserable. She decided to help him and crossed to Uganda with him. The young boy today is her foster child who she stays with in their small tarpaulin house in the settlement. She says despite his young age, Andre, the young boy has kept her company since the day they arrived and has been of great help as she waits for her own.

Given Andre’s tender age (6), Zawadi has no choice but to do everything at home. Despite her delicate condition, she wakes up every morning at 7:00 am and walks about a kilometre downhill to go fetch water for their home use. She fetches a total of 60 litres a day and makes three rounds. After filling her jerry can which takes about five minutes, Zawadi uses a small piece of cloth to tie around the handle of the jerry can and puts it around her head as the 20 litre jerry can swings on her back. She then walks back, uphill to her home. This is an unusual way of carrying. For Zawadi, it is convenient. Culture is beautiful!

When she reaches home, the first thing she does is to add two pel-
lets of Aqua tabs to purify the water. This makes it clean and safe for both drinking and cooking.

Much of the water in the refugee settlement is contaminated and this is why Uganda Red Cross with support from the Netherlands Red Cross distributes water purification tablets and also trains refugees and hosting communities on how to use them. The Uganda Red Cross Volunteers also other hygiene promotion sensitizations on good practices like hand washing, latrine construction among others.

“I fetch water three times a day. The boy I look after is still very young and I have no one else to send to the well nor to help. This has become part of my antenatal exercise, even if I don’t go to hospital, I believe I will be okay” said an assured Zawadi.

“This water is fine. I haven’t faced any problems with it because I ensure to purify with aqua tabs which the Uganda Red Cross people give us. I was educated on how to use them and I have never got any water related illness.” she added.

Uganda Red Cross volunteers sensitize communities in refugee hosting areas on how to observe proper hygiene and sanitation.

“We sensitize them, give out soap, hand washing facilities, latrine construction tools, jerry cans among other things we do to ensure that people remain safe and healthy. We also give out mosquito nets so that people do not suffer from malaria.” Says Frank Namara, Public Health Manager at Uganda Red Cross, attached to the Kyaka II refugee settlement.

Uganda Red Cross remains committed to improving people’s lives especially the most vulnerable.

Justine Zawadi

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JUSTINE ZAWADI
Conflict, disasters, migration, and other humanitarian emergencies globally account for family separation. People suffer terribly when they lose contact with their loved ones and don’t know where they are or whether they are safe or where to start from to trace for them. Uganda Red Cross supports such families to locate people and put them back into contact with their relatives. With support of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (ICRC), Uganda Red Cross supports the process of family unifications. This work involves looking for family members, restoring contact, reuniting families and seeking to clarify the fate of those who remain missing.

Three months ago (July 2018), Uganda Red Cross reunited 24 unaccompanied minors with their long separated families in Rwamwanja, Kyangwali and Nakivale refugee settlements, in south western Uganda.

“The biggest number of refugees we receive here are children and women, majority of these are unaccompanied minors. Their stories break us but we have to be strong and show them love. The Government has worked with partners like the Red Cross to trace their families and reunite them. I thank the Red Cross staff for doing this work very well. Many broken family links have been restored through this family tracing process. It is also exciting when the family members finally meet.” Said Fred Kiwanuka, the Commandant – Office of the Prime Minister at Kyaka II refugee settlement in Mubende, South western Uganda.

Since December 2017, there has been a DRC refugee influx in Uganda especially in the western part of the country. According to recent data released by UNCHR, the UN refugee agency, there are over 270,000 DRC refugees in Uganda and majority of these are in Kyangwali, Kyaka and Rwamwanja settlements. The Uganda Red Cross Restoration of family links desk has identified over 800 cases of reunification need and more than 400 family reunification have been conducted.

“We understand that during war people scatter and the most affected ones are the vulnerable groups like the children. These then cross to Uganda without any information about their
families’ whereabouts. The Red Cross then steps in to offer the tracing services and we are happy to note that in most cases the process is successful and has brought back smiles to parents and their children after a long period of separation.” Said Irene Nakasiita, Coordinator Communications and PR URCS. 18 children were transferred to join their parents in Rwamanja in Kyenjojo district, and the remaining six were transported to Kyangwali and Nakivale in Hoima and Isingiro districts respectively. The children who were evidently jubilant shed tears of joy after seeing their lost parents and relatives. The process is conducted on mutual consent and the Red Cross ensures a thorough process of verifying one’s family and ensuring that both parties are happy with the reunification.

“Any simple detail or information that one has about their relatives gives us a starting point. We have telephone services so once someone has a phone number of their relative we help them call, and then we do the follow up. We also use pictures and Red Cross Messages in the process to identify one’s family and establish a communication channel” Nakasiita added.

Consolatrice Mirimo, a 22 year old Congolese refugee in Rwamwanja settlement was ecstatic after reuniting with her six little brothers who she hadn’t seen in five years.

“As a big sister, I am really grateful. It’s been long since I last saw my brothers. Back in Congo, I was like their mother since our mother had abandoned us. So, not being by their side for all this time has really bothered me a lot. I had never stopped looking for them and hoping to see them one day, I prayed to God night and day. I am so happy that today this prayer has been answered.” she said with tears in her eyes.

Restoration of Family Links in Kyaka II Refugee settlement in July 2018

RFL at a glance

Jan-August 2018

5,299 Red Cross Messages were exchanged
58,870 Refugees were able to restore and maintain family links by phone.
83,578 Refugees visited the Red Cross RFL Points
774 Family reunifications for children
274 Unaccompanied Minors were registered in Refugee Settlements for family tracing.
2,910 Referrals were handled
283 Tracing cases were concluded
A Stitch In Time Saves Thousands In Refugee Hosting Communities In Northern Uganda.

At the beginning of this year (2018), Uganda Red Cross with support from the Netherlands Red Cross launched a health project to improve the lives of people in refugee hosting communities. The project is based in West Nile, Northern Uganda and spreads across Rhino, Imvepi, and Bidibidi refugee settlements.

Over 19,000 have benefited through accessing free medical services, improved hygiene and sanitation, clean and safe water sources, latrine construction materials, hand washing facilities, soap, mosquito nets, menstrual hygiene kits, mama kits for pregnant women, among other health aspects that come along with the projects. A team of trained Uganda Red Cross volunteers have visited over 3,700 households since the year started. They sensitise people on good hygiene and sanitation in their homes which has helped many to reduce illnesses and improve health.

“Over 1500 latrines have been constructed. Some of the key target areas for this project includes reducing maternal mortality rate. This has been ensured through provision of mama kits to expectant mothers, sensitization and healthy practices for pregnant women among others. The project has also engaged refugee communities about HIV/AIDS prevention and control and sensitized locals against stigma. Malaria has also been a key concern in refugee settlement and over 3200 mosquito nets were distributed to protect people from mosquito bites. Our volunteers do hygiene promotion and sensitisations in communities on a daily basis. This helps people here to remain healthy.” Said Ms. Jennifer Okumu, Uganda Red Cross Public Health Officer attached to this project.

Story continues to next page

Top: A young boy in Rhino camp demonstrates how to use a tippy tap and soap to wash hands after visiting a latrine.
Bottom: The NLRC team inspects a latrine of one of the beneficiary in Kyaka II during their recent visit.
URCS Trains 23 WASH Specialists in Faecal sludge Management

Uganda Red Cross Society with support from the Austrian Red Cross held a two weeks training in faecal sludge management. The training was held in Lubigi sewage treatment works in Wakiso district from 24th September 2018 to 05th October, 2018.

The training attracted participants from different Red Cross National Societies including Rwanda Red Cross, Ivory Coast Red Cross, Swedish Red Cross, Netherlands Red Cross, and International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Different Water Hygiene and Sanitation (WASH) experts were brought in from Austrian Red Cross, Swedish Red Cross, and National Water and Sewerage Cooperation as facilitators for the training.

The training focused on treatment of waste before it is released in reservoirs and purifying the water from organisms that cause diarrhoea and other water, hygiene and sanitation related diseases. After the training, participants received certificates of completion. The Austrian Red Cross experts also handed over Faecal Slug testing kits to Uganda Red Cross to boost work done in the refugee hosting communities.

While addressing the participants at the close of the training, the Uganda Red Cross Secretary General urged participants to employ the skills learnt when they return to their different field stations. “I hope we have all mastered the skills and let us not stop at learning, but let us carry these skills out to our countries, communities and ensure that we put them to use. The Red Cross globally is known for saving lives. WASH is one of the ways through which we save lives. Therefore, let’s go and save life through using the skills attained from the training.” Kwesiga said.

Uganda Red Cross has many volunteers who have also trained as Village Health Team Members. They are trained local health volunteers and can manage minor illnesses especially in such communities where access to big health centres is still a challenge. The health outreaches help people who cannot afford to reach far health centres to access proper and medical services. The Red Cross services are free of charge and are for everybody.

While traversing the communities, Uganda Red Cross scribe came across mothers whose joy for accessing an open health provision desk under a tree could not be hidden. “On a monthly basis, Uganda Red Cross brings a team of medical personnel to examine us, assess through check ups and people get free treatment. This is free for us who cannot pay expensive medicines.” Said Mariamngu Atagben, a refugee from South Sudan living in Rhino camp.

“They many come with coughs, malaria, skin infections, urinary tract infections among other illnesses which we can manage on site, give medicine and people go back home. By doing this, many refugees and other nationals in this hosting community can be assured of free treatment when we set up such community health outreaches. We save people’s lives especially those that do not have money. The health centre III and IV are very far. We are committed and since we have medicine, we are able to treat those that come with manageable cases. The complicated cases are referred.” said Ongoly Polly, a Red Cross medical volunteer.

“I thank the organizers of this training especially Uganda Red Cross for taking the lead. We have been given skills in water treatment and purification, and how fast we can prepare water in emergencies and make it clean and safe for users to use in a short period of time. I will use the skills learnt to position my country in a way that we can manage water in emergencies.” Said Placide Mutangana, a participant from Ivory Coast.
Explore the magic behind the nonelectric slow cooker, the Wonderbag

When war or any other emergency breaks out, people scatter. In most cases you have a minute or less to pick something to run with. Sometimes there isn’t any time at all. But if there was, the best options would be a cloth and definitely something to eat. Most people run hungry. Those that run with something cannot keep it hot and safe for long. The food will get cold and spoilt at times. So what do you need in such a situation? The Wonderbag!

A South African invention by poverty activist Sarah Collins, the Wonderbag was introduced in 2008 when millions of South Africans were suffering with abnormal frequent load shedding and power outages. In April 2008, disturbed by these power inconsistencies, Sarah Collins put her mind to extreme creativity. She recalls the night she came up with the idea, in a recent interview with the Business Insider

“In April 2008 I woke up at 2am in the morning and remembered my grandmother taking a pot of porridge off the stove and into some cushions to retain the heat... It all came back to me and I realized this was technology that could change the world,” she said.

The Wonderbag is a heavily insulated bag that keeps food cooking at a low, but safe temperature for up to 12 hrs. It uses the principle of heat retention to cook the food slowly. All one needs to do is cook whatever they are preparing for a few minutes about 5-25 minutes depending on the kind of food, and when it boils to a certain temperature, you shift it to the Wonderbag, properly covered and wait for a certain time. Without any additional energy or fire, food will be ready for serving.

For the last ten years the Wonderbag has been on the market, it has been praised by the United Nations and other climate change institutions as a great innovation to preserve the environment. The famous cooking bag is believed to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by half a ton every year. Just at the beginning of this month, Times Magazine listed the Wonderbag among the top 50 ‘genius products’ in the world. After a decade of existence, there are over 1.5 million Wonderbags across the world today.
In Uganda it took the Wonderbag 10 years to get here. Thanks to Uganda Red Cross and the International Federation of the Red Cross, in partnership with the Norwegian Red Cross who introduced this cooking bag in refugee settlements in Northern Uganda. They started with a pilot study in April where they trained and sensitized locals in Bidibidi and Imvepi settlements on how to use a Wonderbag and its wide benefits. In July, open demos were held in which people participated in cooking competitions using the bag. Over 500 people participated and 200 bags were given out by Red Cross.

“We have traversed the two settlements of Imvepi and Bidibidi and held 15 cooking competitions which also acted as demos for the Wonderbag. The results were commendable. Villages were amazed by the ‘miraculous’ bag which they referred to as the ‘wonderful bag.’” said Simon Anyanzo, Household Energy Pilot Coordinator at URCS.

According to the results from the demos in West Nile, beans need 20 minutes pre-cooking time and about 2-3 hrs. in the bag to be ready. Beef needs 15 minutes pre-cooking and 2hrs in the Wonderbag. Greens and fish need 15 minutes on fire and just an hour in the Wonderbag. Women in communities have greatly relied on the bag while away in their gardens.

“I am so happy for this intervention, I am a member of a community farming group. Nowadays the Wonderbag has been of great help since we carry our cooking food to the farm land. We have different farm groups in this settlement so I would not hesitate to strongly recommend them to use this technology!” said Agnes Wani, a beneficiary in BidiBidi settlement.

In refugee settlements, the Wonderbag also proved very handy with persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups with special needs like the elderly. Evelyn Ajok is a PWD in Ombechi village in Imvepi and her praise for the cooking bag was just overwhelming.

“At first I thought that this was something for Muzungu’s (Whiteman’s) food only. Where was I going to get rice and meat and the fresh beans? I was wrong to believe like I had, this bag has changed my problems, I can now cook anything I want without fear of burning.

Evelyn Wani
Uganda Red Cross and IFRC are looking at how best the bags could be availed to all the PSNs in refugee settlements. According to Mr. Anyanzo, apart from being a great force in preserving the environment, the cooking bag also serves a vital protection purpose given the increased cases of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) among refugee communities. The use of the Wonderbag will reduce the need to fetch more firewood thereby reducing the exposure of women to rape and sexual abuse.

“The bag saves three times the firewood that would be used on conventional stoves. This means women will be going three times less to fetch firewood in a week and this greatly reduces their exposure to any sort of gender based violence” he said

Natural Balances, the company behind the Wonderbag through their CEO Sarah Collins have partnered with the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) to promote the use of Wonderbags in refugee communities across the world, but also in any other emergency situations like disasters. This is already happening in Rwanda and in the Syrian refugee camps in Jordan. In Uganda, the official launch of the Wonderbag to the public will depend on the findings of the pilot which just concluded.
Uganda Red Cross, in partnership with KCCA, in August participated in a campaign to improve sanitation and hygiene situations in all the informal settlements across the five divisions of Kampala.

#Weyonje

Uganda Red Cross joins KCCA to clean up the city
1. Picture showing the extent of damage on road access after the recent bududda landslide

2. A URCS Community volunteer conducting household visit to create awareness about Ebola prevention in Kisoro

3. Our staffs and volunteers have ensured that people in refugee camps understand and have learnt all the handwashing skills
A URCS Ebola preparedness volunteer registering one of the entrants from Congo at a URCS screen boarder point.

URCS & NLRC teams doing a wash survey in Kyaka II. The team visited homes without latrines and other sanitation facilities.

A URCS Intern displaying a road safety message along Rubaga road. This was during the June-July road safety campaign.

The RFL team from URCS and ICRC finalising the paper work with Mrs Goddance who had just received her children back through the RFL program.
Bududa Landslides 2018

Join us to raise 1.2 Billion shillings needed to support our brothers and sisters affected by the landslides in Bududa and those in the neighbouring districts that still face the same risk

#StandWithBududa
“STAND WITH THE PEOPLE OF BUDUDA”

Uganda Red Cross seeks 1,284,920,060 shillings (339,477USDs) to support the 700 people affected in Bududa and over 5,000 people at high risk in the neighbouring districts of Namisindwa, Manafwa, Butalejja, in the Mt. Elgon region, Eastern Uganda.

How to support: Uganda Red Cross appreciates all forms of in-kind and monetary support. For in-kind support, you can deliver supplies to Uganda Red Cross Offices along Rubaga road or any Red Cross office within your reach.

For Financial support:

Bank A/C – UGANDA REDCROSS FINANCE CORE
Bank – Stanbic Bank Uganda Limited
A/C Number – 9030008610559
Branch – Corporate
Swift Code – SBICUGKX

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Please visit our website at www.redcrossug.org for online donation procedures

For more Information, Contact

URCS Public Relations and Communications Office: 0774382583 / 0755000695
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