URCS on a move towards innovation: leaving nobody behind

This season brings glad tidings to all communities around us. I am glad to share this message with you as we all celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. As many of you break off for Christmas, Uganda Red Cross staff and Volunteers are like front line soldiers. They will continue offering humanitarian services to the people we serve. Some staff are on standby- and others are available to respond to any call where the public needs our services. To us, this is the true meaning of Christmas, sharing our love with those in need.

Thank you for walking the year 2018 with us. As we crown it, we take time to reflect on the key successes we achieved and the challenges we encountered as we pursued the tasks we set out to accomplish, as an institution by end of the year.

On behalf of the entire Uganda Red Cross team, I thank the staff, Volunteers, and members for the hard work, team spirit and concerted efforts put in to ensure that we deliver on our humanitarian mandate.

I also thank our dear partners and donors for trusting Uganda Red Cross with your resources. We have walked a great year of recovery with your support and great cheer! We have been able to deliver on the key mandates of the National society through your committed support. Thank you and may the collaboration and partnership spirit grow even stronger in 2019.

2019 is going to be unique in many ways as we are going to shift our focus towards improving innovative ways to ensure sustainable funding. We are well positioned, with our partners, to come up with new and improved systems in detection of disasters and outbreaks before they happen. We have devised means to rely on real time alerts that are low-cost, low-resource and adaptable. We have already rolled this out in our Community epidemic and pandemic preparedness program in the highly risky Ebola targeted districts; Bundibugyo, Kabarole, Kanungu, Ntoroko, Bunyangabu and so on.

The New Year will also center on further strengthening of what makes us unique in our work, Volunteers. We continue to build capacity for our volunteers and train them in various skills and knowledge needed for them to be able to sufficiently deliver in their respective capacities. We will also further equip our 51 branches across the country with the capacity they need and ensure growth and impact is felt in society.
Some of the highlights of the year have been:

- Continued support towards the South Sudan refugee operation where we are a key player in Health and WASH services, ensuring adequate supply of safe and clean water, relief nonfood items distribution, restoration of broken family links, hygiene promotion through latrine construction, supporting women and adolescent mothers, supporting persons with special needs among others.

- Response to the DR-Congo refugee influx since December 2017. We managed the first arrivals at the reception centers, set up initial structures for accommodation until Government established official structures to settle them. Uganda Red Cross managed the Cholera outbreak that proceeded the influx in the settlement. From the onset when refugees entering Uganda via DR-Congo came with severe Cholera cases.

- Uganda Red Cross response to flash floods in Teso and Karamoja regions from March to July 2018. Our teams also responded to floods in Kasese, Kiryandongo, Kabale and Isingiro. We also responded to a number of fires that happened throughout the year including in Ssese Islands, Mukono, Kalangala and in Rakai.

- Response to Mudslide Victims in Bududa in October 2018. (This is still on-going)

- Response to Cholera outbreaks in Kampala and neighboring districts from March to July 2018.

- Mobilizing safe blood for emergency blood transfusion

- Offering community health through first aid services and emergency community ambulance services and rescue.

- Continued Risk reduction and livelihood projects in Eastern (Mt. Elgon) and North – eastern Uganda.

- We have been at the center of the ongoing Ebola prevention and preparedness on the Uganda-Congo Boarder. We have trained our volunteers in community based surveillance and other early warning systems. We have also trained them in dead body management and safe and dignified burial. We continue to offer screening services at all points of entry and our community based volunteers have intensified social mobilization and risk communication engagements.

While undertaking the above lifesaving interventions, Uganda Red Cross also trained more volunteers and recruited more staff as part of building capacity of the National society to be able to handle emergencies whenever they occur. This is part of our mandate and we are glad to have supported more than 4.5 million people in our operations.

The year 2018 is the second year that saw URCS into progressive implementation of the new strategic plan 2017-2020, the new policies and systems, and full time implementation of the whole Change / transformation process of the National Society. This is part of what the new Red Cross stands for while ensuring a high level of professionalism, transparency, zero toler-
ance to fraud, equity and meaningful programming.

With all lose ends fixed, we are in business with many partners and others are coming on board to join the humanitarian cause of saving lives.

Notwithstanding some challenges while endeavoring to bring back the National society to total recovery, we recorded traces of transitional resistance and sabotage, hangover of the previous institutional cultural orientations, red tape, change fever among others. We will however continue to uphold the values of integrity, professionalism and accountability while we adhere to our call to responsiveness as we carry out our core mandates.

Worth to mention, the road to bridging gaps in disaster response and management in this country is progressive. Through the Office of the Prime Minister, we started on the disaster Law framework, tabled before legislators and we await to see the Bill in place sooner than later.

The process of revising the Red Cross Act is also steadfast and this will strengthen and consolidate the position of the National Society.

I wish you a joyous Christmas and fruitful New Year 2019.

Secretary General

Robert Kwesiga
SECRETARY GENERAL

Everywhere for Everyone!