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THE
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UGANDA PROGRAM

Message from the Country Representative



With Uganda going through serious trouble with the second covid-19 wave, we continue to encourage you to get the vaccination at the earliest opportunity.

The previous months have seen the worst infection transmission that at least each of us has lost a friend or relative.

The humanitarian world has not been spared either. Four of our local partners have lost their country directors.

While we take precautions at the

office, do the same while outside with your family & friends.

Also, educate your colleagues in communities to take the pandemic serious and be part of the solution to minimise the spread of covid-19.

I want to thank the Government of Uganda for giving humanitarian workers privileged access to vaccination over millions of people who wish to be vaccinated.

Therefore, humanitarian workers have no excuse whatsoever not to be vaccinated. This is for your good and that of the people of concern that you serve.

Again, currently, the only way out of this pandemic is mass vaccination.

Thank you, our donors, for the continued support.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Jesse Kamstra'. The signature is fluid and stylized, written over a horizontal line.

Jesse Kamstra
Country Representative
LWF Uganda

EDITOR'S NOTE



Dear Reader,

I am excited to know that you are still surviving amid the hard times.

Yes, life is full of ups and downs, but we keep pushing.

The bad times aside, we are happy that there is still more to celebrate.

Our staff on the ground are more active than

ever that we have lots of success stories to share with you in this edition of our quarterly newsletter.

Read how the LWF hired ambulances are saving mothers and their babies, the mobile courts facilitating quick access to justice, and more.

Thanks for the time, and keep safe.

Jilian Namagenbe

Communications Officer

Despite the second lockdown, LWF continues to deliver services

BY LILIAN NAMAGEMBE
Communications Officer

Amid various COVID-19 variants that have fueled aggressive transmissions as Uganda experienced the second wave, LWF made a deliberate decision that all staff should stay and deliver.

“Of course, the mode of delivery has to change, but that is, aligned with our mandate—that this is the time when our services are most relevant,” Mr Paul Orikushaba, the Programme Coordinator, noted.

Staff are equipped with personal protective equipment, including facemasks and shields, sanitisers and full protective gears for those who work in areas at high risk of infections like health facilities. This is intended to take extra care as staff continue to deliver.

All office areas have been decongested while the field staff who move around settlements and surrounding host communities maximise the use of motorcycles instead of congesting vehicles.

In June, management also instituted remote monitoring of projects when the government initially announced a lockdown of 42 days, banning the movements across districts.

However, the increase in COVID-19 infections and the subsequent lockdown measures made it crucial for

At Ukuni health centre III, where Ms Nangonzi conducts a series of individual and group counselling sessions, the clients have either healed from COVID-19 or have the virus.

MOTIVATION

“It is something scary, but what matters is doing something however small to make sure these people live through another day,” says Nangonzi.



Josephine Nangonzi wearing full protective gear before starting work in the Palorinya refugee settlement.

LWF humanitarian workers like Josephine Nangonzi to redouble their efforts. The 30-year-old community psychologist in the Palorinya settlement in the West Nile subregion is equally scared of contracting COVID-19, but she is ready to serve humanity even in the most challenging situation.

At Ukuni health centre III, where Ms Nangonzi conducts a series of individual and group counselling sessions, the clients have either healed from COVID-19 or have the virus. She has to do everything not to contract the virus, but this has not stopped her.



Virtual events in commemoration of the World Refugee Day

Each World Refugee Day, 20 June, LWF joins the world to honour the millions of people who have been forced to flee their countries because of war, conflicts and persecution in search of peace to rebuild their lives.

Due to the friendly policies that provide refugees rights to education, work, health-care, and other essential social services, Uganda is one of the largest refugee-hosting nations, with over 1,400,000 refugees.

Most of the refugees in Uganda come from war-torn South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Due to the COVID situation, LWF has held virtual events to mark the day for the second time in a row. Like other partners, most engagements were held using different media channels, especially radio and television, to discuss the refugees' critical issues.

The day was this year marked under the theme: Together, we heal, learn and shine.

While appearing on NTV Uganda, Mr Paul



We are already testing for COVID-19 at some border points, but we also know we have porous borders. So, we communicate to communities to be extra vigilant if they see new people.

Mr Orikushaba explained on the issue of illegal movements.

Orikushaba, the LWF Programme Coordinator, said the pandemic affects refugees the same way it affects other people.

"People's movement is restricted, including that of aid workers and the way we give service to the refugee is restricted. The difference is that the refugees are secluded," Mr Orikushaba said.

Due to the current circumstances, Mr Orikushaba explained that the organization had used the day to conduct more risk communication engagements in the settlement so that the people of concern know what to do, report symptoms and comply with the Health Ministry's standard operating procedures.

"We do this while moving door to door and road drives to sensitize the refugees that the Ugandan laws affect them and that when the government gives directives, they have to observe," Mr Orikushaba added. He stated that the same sensitization to everyone about vaccination is also given to refugees because they have limited access to health services. No one is safe until everyone is safe.

28,000 extremely vulnerable refugees receive cash assistance in Kyangwali Settlement



A beneficiary in Kyangwali refugee settlement located in South Western Uganda receives money from a mobile banking van

July 2021 marked the end of the Multi-purpose Cash Transfers (MPCT) assistance provided to a total of 28,386 refugees (7,207 households) among the most socio-economically vulnerable refugees in Kyangwali Refugee Settlement.

Vulnerable groups include children, pregnant women, older adults, and malnourished people, among others.

These were supported with monthly cash assistance to address their immediate and basic non-food needs.

The people of concern received cash support through "bank on wheels" and mobile money to adhere to COVID-19 standard operating procedures established by the Ministry of Health.

Rollled out in March 2019, LWF imple-

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The project started in March 2019 and had two phases. Overall, we had a target of 7,155 households (over 28,000 individuals)

Ms Diletta Bartolozzi, the Grants Manager at LWF Uganda.

mented this life-saving activity under the Uganda Cash Consortium (UCC) led by the Danish Refugee Council, together with Action against Hunger and the Uganda Red Cross Society, thanks to funding from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO).

“The project had two phases. Overall, we had a target of 7,155 households (over 28,000 individuals).

I'm proud that we managed to assist the most vulnerable in the settlement," says Ms Diletta Bartolozzi, the Grants Manager at LWF Uganda.

The household size determines the cash value per beneficiary. This helps to enhance the socio-economic status of the more vulnerable households to meet their uncovered basic household needs.

World Breastfeeding Week 2021: Advancing life-saving interventions for babies



LWF staff and partners pose for a group photo after the district advocacy meeting in the Lamwo district

BY HENRY TURINAWE
Nutritional Officer

LWF marked the World Breastfeeding Week that falls every 1-7 August, engaging partners at different levels to discuss achievements in the previous years, look at the gaps and set other nutrition goals.

The theme for this year was "Protecting Breastfeeding: A Shared Responsibility."

LWF uses the Care Group approach to promote improved infant nutrition and hygiene and increase the number of exclusively breastfed children for the first six months.

Under the approach, social and behaviour changes are promoted through supported peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. Care groups are composed of households with either a pregnant mother, lactating mother or a child under five years.

To maximize the benefits of breastfeeding, the

World Health Organization (WHO) recommends breastfeeding initiation within the first hour of life. Exclusive breastfeeding is when the infant only receives breastmilk without any other food or drink -not even water.

During the week, the nutrition team also conducted meetings with the care groups to share experiences, successes and identify areas where the mothers need more support.

"From the meetings we have held both in communities and at the district level, all indicators show that our interventions remain effective," says Henry Turinawe, a nutritional Officer in Lamwo district, north of Uganda.

The World Breastfeeding week dates back to 1990 when the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) created a memorandum to promote and support breastfeeding.



Orientation of Village Health Teams (VHTs) in Madi Okollo district on key breastfeeding messages to use while engaging communities

Cash grants assist refugees in meeting their non-food basic needs.



Ms Scovia Avico (left) talking to staff from LWF and Uganda Redcross at her home in Kyangwali settlements

On March 15, 2018, Ms Scovia Avico entered Uganda along with her three children. Avico left Njugu, a town in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to Uganda not as a visitor or a tourist but as a sole option to escape the never-ending conflict back home that has claimed thousands of people.

Starting a new life in a foreign country usually is not easy, and so was Avico's experience. Avico entered Uganda with nothing but satisfaction that she made the trip and her life and her children were finally safe.

At entry, Avico says, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) gave the family a tarp, two jerrycans and saucepans to kick start their stay in Uganda's Southwestern Kyangwali settlement.

"The condition was horrible. I remember not having an attestation card. All I had was a ration card, yet both are required to get all the services of a refugee. This went on for two months. I could not get food. The beans we got upon entry, cooking oil, maize flour, and the solar lantern is what we had to start our new life," Avico says.

And her misery was compounded by unethical behaviour from some of the refugees a few days later. "The cooking oil and solar lantern were stolen after two days. We had to get used to darkness again," she adds. Determined to survive in this settlement, Avico was quick to make friends. Soon, she made

contact with an older woman in their neighbourhood. It is this neighbour that would lend her some saucepans and utensils. Yes, it takes two to tangle. Where was Avico's husband as she struggled to raise the children singlehandedly? "He had married another lady," Avico, with a heavy heart, says.

Turning Point

One day, LWF staff visited her house, and after undergoing an assessment, she was told she qualified for a newly implemented project providing monthly cash assistance to refugees.

"Before such cash, I did not have chairs in my house. Thanks to eight months of cash assistance, I was able to buy enough balanced food. I also bought pigs which I rear for income. I have been able to buy clothes for all my three children, a mattress for them and cater for their medical needs." Avico now is a proud owner of a permanent house built using proceeds from her piggery project.

With funding from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), LWF partnered in the Uganda Cash Consortium (UCC) framework led by the Danish Refugee Council, together with Action against Hunger and the Uganda Red Cross Society to provide monthly cash assistance to newly-arrived and the most socio-economically vulnerable refugees in Kyangwali settlement to address immediate and basic non-food needs.

From slum kid to a celebrated city chef

BY ANNET NAMAJA
Project Officer

Patrick Ssenkubuge, 24, has made a name as one of the celebrated chefs, preparing delicious meals at one of the top hotels in Kampala city.

But ten years back, Ssenkubuge lived with his paternal grandmother in a leaky ram shackled house in one of the urban slums in the city suburbs after his mother abandoned him when he was four years old. When he joined secondary school, Sekubuge’s grandmother could not afford paying his fees and he had to clean utensils and classrooms at school for him to study without paying.

Unfortunately, the fifth borne of nine children had to drop out of secondary school to take care of his younger siblings.

“I did all sorts of odd jobs including unlawful street vending of Jewelry such as rings, bracelets, and necklaces in the city,” Senkubuge recalls.

Senkubuge needed money to survive, yet he did not qualify for any formal job or have vocational skills. “At the street where I sold Jewelry, I engaged in running battles with the police who beat us for causing congestion,” Senkubuge says.

Frustrated and broke, he sought help from a colleague who had benefitted from the Youth Empowerment Project and was referred to Makindye youth center to get support in 2018.

“At Makindye, I was assessed and they found that I qualified for the program.” Senkubuge says. “I chose to join catering classes because I loved cooking.

Senkubuge was also involved in other sports activities provided at the center to help the youths identify and develop their inner talents. He was also trained as a peer educator to reach out to his peers with information on

About the project

The Urban Youth Empowerment Project implemented by LWF through the Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL), a local non-government organisation, addresses the huge unemployment and related income poverty problem, especially among the youth living in the informal settlement. This poverty problem makes young people very vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and joining crime gangs to find a means of livelihood.



Patrick Ssenkubuge donned in his chef uniform at work

Sexual Reproductive Health. After six months, I started earning some allowance at a restaurant where I was placed to do internship.

To date, Senkubuge is fully employed at Makindye Country Club located in Kampala City where he has risen through the ranks to the level of Assistant chef because of the skills, hard work and good conduct that he acquired during the training.

Senkubuge is paying school fees for his three siblings. He has also saved Shs500,000 (about \$142) to start a bakery. “I will also be able to and employ other youths,” he shares.

Senkubuge is a representative of the hundreds of vulnerable youths that LWF equips with vocational skills to secure, create jobs and improve their livelihood under the Urban Youth Empowerment Project (YEP).

The project is implemented in urban slum areas located in the Kampala City Divisions of Makindye, Nakawa and Rubaga in partnership with Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL) a local NGO that works with youths who are vulnerable to exploitation and at risk to HIV/AIDS infection.

LWF provides ambulances for refugee mothers



A mother boards an ambulance for referral to Kyangwali health centre IV in Kyangwali refugee settlement.

In April 2020, Rebecca Mapendo was three months pregnant when she felt a sharp pain in her lower abdomen.

The 31-year-old Congolese refugee lives with her husband in the kyangwali settlement located in South Western Uganda.

Mapendo was thrown off when she started bleeding from her genitals. Since she was still in the first trimester, the couple was yet to save any money in preparation for the baby.

Pondering how to get to the nearest health facility, 15kms away, Mapendo remembered she had an easier way out.

"I looked up the ambulance contact I was given during a pregnancy mapping activity a month ago," Mapendo recalls.

LWF had visited Mapendo's village for pregnancy mapping to locate expectant mothers for emergency response in case of any need. "I

called, and it didn't take long before the ambulance arrived in my compound to pick me up," Mapendo adds.

At Kasonga Health Centre IV, Mapendo arrived on time. She was examined and treated.

"I could not believe the baby and myself had survived," Mapendo rejoices. "Many of my colleagues here and back in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have lost their young ones in similar circumstances."

Mapendo arrived in the Kyangwali settlement in 2016 after escaping a devastating rebel attack that claimed the lives of her seven children and husband. "The war took everything from me," laments Mapendo.

To rebuild her life, Mapendo has since remarried and has a four-year-old son with her new husband, a Congolese refugee. With such a heart-breaking history, losing another child would be too much for

Mapendo to bear.

She appreciates LWF and UNFPA for facilitating Village Health Teams (VHTs) who keep checking on them. Annet Pita, a teenage mother in Bidi-bidi settlement, attests how the ambulance saved the life of her premature twins.

The 18-year-old South Sudanese refugee got pregnant during the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown after the closure of schools.

With the boyfriend stuck in neighbouring South Sudan when Uganda closed the border as a measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19, Pita could hardly care for herself.

When she delivered premature twins at the nearby lower health centre, Pita did not have money to hire an ambulance to transport her to the Health Centre IV, which provides more advanced newborn care.

STORY CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE



The LWF midwife examines a mother during transfer

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Although the medical workers gave her a referral to a Health Centre IV, which provides more advanced newborn care, Pita did not have any money to pay for her transport. "And neither could I sit on a Boda Boda with the two babies," laments Pita. In the desperate race to save the life of the young ones, the standby ambulance flashed a glimmer of hope. "I was relieved when the midwife at the facility called the ambulance, and my babies were admitted into the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at the next health centre on time."

Ms Irene Maturu, the acting District Health Officer of Yumbe district, where Bidi Bidi settlement is located, appreciates LWF and UNFPA for saving expectant mothers from delays and using riskier means like motorcycles and bicycles.

"We have seen a great reduction in the number of stillbirths and maternal mortality because the ambulance is on standby, fueled all the time, and maintained," Ms Maturu says,

"We can even finish a quarter without any maternal death registered or at most one compared to the years before when we would lose at least 2-3 mothers every quarter."

Indeed, there is a notable reduction in maternal and infant deaths across the districts of intervention. For example, Obongi district, which hosts the Palorinya settlement, registered zero maternal deaths in 2020, according to the Ministry of Health records. Arua, Adjumani, and Kikuube districts have registered a sharp decline from four maternal related deaths between January and June 2020 to one recorded between July

and December the same year, according to the Health Management Information Systems (HMIS).

The recruitment of more midwives at the maternity wards has also reduced the waiting hours of mothers and accessibility of reproductive health services, a health worker at Boroli settlement notes.

"Since this year began, we have not registered any maternal death at this health facility," Ms Loice Abiria, an enrolled midwife at Biira Health Center III, says. "This is largely attributed to the availability of standby ambulance and added health personnel provided by the project."

Gender-based Violence

Because physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a spouse or partner is a significant factor in maternal and reproductive health, the project also delivers services to Gender-Based Violence victims. The intervention is done through VHTs who counsel, reconcile families, identify and refer victims for a health examination.

Through this intervention, peace has been restored in the family of Mary* (not real name), a 35-year-old from the host community of Teyao village in the Northern District of Agago.

Mary started facing domestic violence hardship shortly after the birth of her firstborn. For three years, Mary* would return from her small business to physical abuse perpetrated by the drunkard husband. "To make matters worse, he could not provide basic needs for the family because he spent all the money on drinking," laments Mary.

Not even interventions from clan leaders restored sanity that at one point she contemplated suicide. Her turning point came when she was invited to attend a sensitization meeting on SGBV prevention in 2020.

"I went back home and shared with my husband the effect of domestic violence on the family as shared at the meeting," says Mary. "I wept as I pleaded for him to stop violence that he was touched," she adds.

"Slowly by slowly, my husband changed and started taking family responsibility. The beatings have also stopped." Behold, the fruits of a happy family is the six-month pregnancy that May was carrying at this interview in June. Unlike before, her husband has also agreed to attend antenatal care visits at the health facility.

This story was compiled by; *Paula Amviko, Sajas Akabitunga, Olivia Ayebare and Harriet Athieno.*

Facilitating quicker access to justice for refugees

BY Jacky Ruth Akello
Advocacy Officer

Uganda hosts over 1.4m refugees, mainly from neighboring war-torn South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, who are prone to crime as they get accustomed to the foreign law. These also pressure the already inadequate judicial resources, yet the courthouses are far from the settlements. Thus, beyond refugees' food and other protection needs, accessibility to justice is another hurdle for refugees and the host communities.

Therefore, to fill this gap, LWF, with funding from Bread for the World, partners with justice law and order sector institutional representatives in the districts to conduct court sessions in the communities.

Also known as mobile courts, the sessions are organised to offset the vast case backlog and provide victims quick access to justice.

The interventions are implemented under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Project born out of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, which reviews the human rights records of all UN Member States.

In collaboration with the Courts of Law, Police, Prisons and other partners, LWF conducts mobile courts and other legal awareness sessions in South Western Uganda's Kamwenge refugee settlement and Northern Uganda's Pader district and Adjumani settlements in West Nile.

Subsequently, the judicial officials have reported a reduction in the case backlog, decongestion of prisons and significantly justice is brought nearer to the people as a solution to the long distances (up to 80 km) that refugees and host communities often had to travel to access formal courts.

"LWF has facilitated the mobile courts very well," says a member of the District Coordination committee in Rwamwanja settlement located in Kamwenge district. The project also provides free legal counsel to refugees imprisoned for breaking the law unknowingly due to the variance in the legal systems.

"I was arrested and charged with defilement when I married a 16-year-old girl, "James (not real names), a former refugee inmate, says he did not know it was



A mobile court session is ongoing in the Adjumani settlement

illegal to marry a girl below 18 years in Uganda.

"It is allowed back in DRC, and I just learnt from the LWF lawyer who came to my rescue that it was illegal," adds James*. Since then, the lawyer's counsel has helped James* correct his mistake when he let the girl go and married a 22-year old.

"I have joined the Gender-based violence taskforce, which creates awareness about the effects of child marriages," he states. With the combined efforts of the Gender-based violence taskforce members like James*, who have reformed as a result of the project, the Refugee Welfare Committees (RWC) in settlements have also confirmed a significant reduction in the crime rate.

"We used to handle 20 Gender-based violence cases in one month in 2016 before the project started," notes an RWC leader in Pagirinya settlement. The settlement hosts South Sudanese refugees in the Adjumani district, north of Uganda. "We have seen the cases drop to less than five a month," he adds.

As LWF and partners advocate for human rights and reinforcement of the law, the high poverty level is still a stumbling block as many refugees choose to settle for money provided by those who commit crimes against them.

Mobility devices and grants restore hope to refugees living with disability



BY TURAHABWA HARRIET
Protection Officer

Since his childhood, Lazarus* (not his real name) a 41-year-old who was born crippled found it hard to crawl to do daily work and access places including market areas, and school.

Life was even harder when he arrived in the Kyagwali refugee settlement after his wife and children helped him to flee the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2018. As a refugee, he found it hard to access distribution points to get food which he had to collect in person.

Receiving the device

Thus, in February this year, Lazarus could not believe his eyes when he saw a group of people, including LWF staff and physiotherapists, walk into his small compound.

“They were carrying my tricycle in a vehicle and were looking for me in my village,” Lazarus recalls with Joy.

A few days ago, while crawling and struggling to access one of the food distribution

About the project

LWF, with funding from the United States Government Department of State, Bureau of Population Refugees and Migration (PRM), implements the Reconnecting Lives, Vision and Empowerment (ReLiVE) project to empower the South Sudanese and Congolese refugee communities to reduce their vulnerabilities and to prevent and respond to their protection risks

centres, Lazarus had met an LWF staff. The staff recorded his name and location before assessing his condition. “He promised to support me, but still, I could not believe his words,” adds the excited Lazarus. He notes that the development restored his hope that he could now move with ease and do his daily activities like any other person without struggling.

“My journey hasn’t been easy. At times, Boda Boda riders would sympathize and offer me a lift, but others would request money to transport me, which I would deduct from the money I receive in place of food. This would mean that being left with less money to take care of my family,” he recounts.

LWF also partners with an International organization, Humanity & Inclusion, to offer physiotherapy services to vulnerable people living with disabilities. For sustainability, the beneficiaries are trained to handle the devices with care and do minor repairs where necessary. To cover his basic needs and the family, Lazarus was supported with UGX 550,000 (about \$147) unconditional cash grant to buy basic needs for himself and the family.

PHOTO GALLERY



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