



Editorial

In this month's newsletter, we are thrilled to share inspiring stories of resilience, collaboration, and positive transformation from various initiatives supported by KRC-Uganda.

Starting with the powerful journey of Rebecca Anyesi, a 37-year-old mother of five a member of the Tujikaze care group, embodies the success of the Maternal Child Health and Nutrition (MCHN) intervention. Through nutrition education, Rebecca transformed her family's well-being, embracing self-reliance in vegetable cultivation using the Optimize Land Use Model.

Transitioning to the Kyaka II refugee settlement, the Kulea Watoto Project takes center stage, addressing malnutrition through community dialogues. Collaborative efforts identify causes and implement actionable approaches, creating a sustainable and nourishing environment. Engaging both community members and leaders, the dialogues focus on the correlation between nutrition and Early Childhood Development.

Venturing into the Rwenzori region in Kakinga T/C, Bunyangabu District, we uncover a silent revolution in farming with the Food Security for Family Farmers Through Agro-ecology program. In Kakooga C, farmers embrace agroecology through the Food Security for Family Farmers program, showcasing enhanced productivity and environmental impact through integrated farm planning.

Lastly, we turn our attention Kyokuroraho Produce Group in Kituru village stands out in the Young Africa Works Markets for Youth initiative, highlighting the transformative power of collective collaboration in achieving economic prosperity.

These stories highlight the enduring impact of community-focused initiatives supported by KRC-Uganda. As we celebrate these successes, we acknowledge the dedication and resilience of individuals and communities striving for positive change. Together, we continue to nurture healthier communities, one initiative at a time.

Editor: **Caroline N. Bwana**
Documentation Associate
(KRC-Uganda)

A COLLECTIVE APPROACH TO COMBAT MALNUTRITION IN CHILDREN UNDER 5 AND SUPPORT PREGNANT AND LACTATING WOMEN

By Maria Kabugho

Nurturing a healthy community is a life long process that requires persistence. Every individual within the community has a role to play in fostering a healthier and more vibrant environment. The choices made at home, work, school, and in places of worship largely determine personal health and contribute to a community's vitality.

The Kulea Watoto Project unites community voices by facilitating community dialogues with members and leaders in the operational areas, aimed at addressing the prevalence of malnutrition in Kyaka II refugee settlement. The information gathered during these dialogues is intended to foster the development of ideas and relationships between nutrition and early childhood development for children aged 5 and under, as well as pregnant and lactating women. These community dialogues target both community members and their leaders, who can contribute flexible and achievable approaches that caregivers can adapt to effectively address the burden of malnutrition in Kyaka II refugee settlement.

KRC-Uganda organized a community dialogue focusing on the correlation between nutrition and Early Childhood Development in the Sweswe Zone within Kyaka II Refugee Settlement. The dialogue specifically engaged stakeholders at both the settlement and Kyegegwa District levels, local leaders, community structures (VHTs), and community members. Throughout the dialogue, participants were guided through an exploration of prevalent forms of malnutrition, understanding their root causes, comprehending the impacts of malnutrition on early childhood development, and discussing actionable steps to alleviate the burden of malnutrition.



Figure 1: The representative from Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) giving his remarks during the community dialogue in Sweswe Zone in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement

The causes of malnutrition among children aged 5 and under, as well as pregnant and lactating women, in the Sweswe Zone of Kyaka II refugee settlement were identified as follows: low dietary diversity, maternal diseases such as anemia, teenage pregnancies, inadequate child spacing, suboptimal care practices, insufficient water supply and poor sanitation, household food insecurity, inadequate and infrequent feeding practices, prolonged and recurrent illnesses, early cessation of breastfeeding, and a lack of stimulation and other essential early childhood development practices, among other factors. Community members, in collaboration with their local leaders, have identified actionable approaches to address the challenge of malnutrition in the Sweswe Zone. These include feeding children aged 5 and under, as well as pregnant and lactating women, with a variety of locally available foods from the three essential food classes to ensure proper growth of unborn babies and children aged 0-5 years. Additionally, the community is working in partnership with their Village Health Teams (VHT) to implement de-worming and Vitamin A supplementation campaigns for children aged 5 and under. Pregnant women are encouraged to take iron and folic acid to prevent anemia and reduce the risk of complications during pregnancy. Lactating mothers are advised to initiate breastfeeding immediately after delivery, within the first hour, and to exclusively breastfeed their babies for the first complete six months, responding to the baby's feeding needs both day and night. Furthermore, the community emphasizes the importance of seeking family planning services and support to create adequate spacing between pregnancies, contributing to the overall health of the babies.

The Refugee Welfare Leader (RWC I) encouraged community members to actively participate in various groups established by organizations within the community to avail themselves of nutrition and livelihood support. The representative from the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) urged participants to cultivate a mindset shift from relying on relief aid to fostering self-resilience. This shift involves engaging in income-generating activities to enhance family livelihoods, especially considering the decreasing donor resources and reductions in ration allocations.

FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE THROUGH FARMER COLLABORATION

By Agaba Henry

Agricultural Extension worker



Fig.2: A training sessions for farmers to teach them how to improve house hold income through farming.

In the Rwenzori region, specifically in Kakinga T/C, Bunyangabu District, lies Kakooga C, where a silent revolution is unfolding in the world of farming. Here, a group of farmers, having engaged with KRC-Uganda in implementing a program for Food Security for Family Farmers through Agro-ecology, funded by Broederlijk Delen, has embarked on a transformative journey toward integrated farm planning through agroecology. This collaboration has not only increased productivity but has also improved farm health, resilience, and diversity, showcasing the remarkable potential of sustainable agriculture in the community.

Agroecology, a holistic farming approach, emphasizes the interconnection of ecological, social, and economic factors. It promotes sustainable farming practices that harness the power of nature while minimizing harm to the environment. In Kakooga C, this transformation offers hope for farmers looking to break free from the constraints of conventional agriculture that they realized were depleting their soils.

The catalyst for this transformation was the engagement of farmers with the KRC-Uganda Extension Worker. The Extension Worker brought a wealth of knowledge and expertise in agroecological practices, creating a platform for learning and collaboration among the farmers. Through demonstrations and one-on-one consultations, the farmers in Kakooga C began to understand the principles of agroecology and implement them on their farms.





Fig.3: Henry demonstrating to farmers how to make a water basin in the banana plantation.

One key component of agroecology is integrated farm planning, involving the design of farms that considers natural ecosystems, promotes biodiversity, and reduces reliance on external inputs like synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. In Kakooga C, farmers started reorganizing their farms to include diverse crops, trees, and animals. This not only increased resilience but also improved soil fertility and pest control. The introduction of crop diversity became a game-changer for farmers in Kakooga C. They diversified their plantings to include not only staple crops but also a variety of fruits, vegetables, and legumes. This diversity not only enriched their diets but also acted as a natural defence against pests and diseases. Farmers noticed a significant reduction in the need for chemical pesticides, resulting in cost savings and less environmental impact.



Agroecology places a strong emphasis on soil health and regeneration. Farmers in Kakooga C learned about the importance of organic matter, cover cropping, and minimal tillage. They adopted these practices with enthusiasm, leading to healthier soils that retained moisture and nutrients, benefiting both the environment. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this journey was the spirit of collaboration that emerged in Kakooga C. Farmers decided to regularly meet at each member's home, rotating locations. They shared knowledge, identified challenges, provided collective solutions, and exchanged experiences with the host in the presence of the Agriculture Extension Worker. This sense of community and togetherness not only strengthened their resilience but also fostered a supportive environment for continuous learning and improvement.



Fig 4: Farmers establishing nursery beds for vegetables received from KRC-Uganda to improve their nutrition status.

In conclusion, the story of farmers in Kakooga C, Kakinga T/C, Bunyangabu District, is proof of the transformative power of agroecology and community collaboration. Through their engagement with KRC-Uganda, they have not only improved their livelihoods but also embraced a more sustainable and resilient approach to agriculture. As they continue on this path, they serve as an inspiring example for others in adjacent villages, proving that with the right knowledge and determination, a brighter and more sustainable future for farming is possible.

The results of this collaboration are becoming evident on the farms. Productivity is increasing, and many farmers report higher yields compared to before KRC-Uganda had started supporting them with good agronomic practices. Farmers believe this will translate into improved food security, increased income, community empowerment through investments in education and healthcare, thanks to diverse nutrition training, nutrition screening of children under five, and cookery demonstrations from KRC, along with improved home infrastructure like wash facilities.



KYOKURORRAHO PRODUCE GROUP IN KABWOYA SCALES UP TO MAIZE PRODUCTION

By Alice Kabajogya



Fig 5: Alice inspecting the maize garden with kyokuroraho produce group members

Kyokuroraho Produce Group stands as a beacon among the Young Africa Works Markets for Youth, belonging to the 1st Cohort in Kikuube district. Nestled in Kituru village, Bubogo Parish, Kabwoya sub-county, this group is fully registered with Kikuube District Local Government, boasting a membership of 34 individuals, including 20 females and 14 males. The group is dedicated to maize farming and concurrently engages in savings and credit activities. Since 2019, the group's savings have experienced substantial growth, increasing from 3,000,000 UGX to an impressive 45,000,000 UGX.



Fig 6: Members of the group receiving advice from Technical person after the inspection of the gardens.

In the past, group members cultivated individual gardens, adhering to the group's constitution, which mandated each member to save three bags of maize to contribute to the group's collective income at the end of the season. However, with the introduction of the Young Africa Works Markets for Youth initiative by KRC, a realization emerged – the need to work together as a cohesive unit for a shared purpose. The group made concerted efforts to shift their mindset towards collaboration. This planting season marked a significant shift for the group. They decided to lease 6 acres of land and collectively planted maize, a strategic move that holds promise for the group's economic prosperity. Anticipating a bountiful harvest, the group aims to yield 10 metric tons of maize, a venture that is expected to substantially enhance their collective income. At present, the maize crop is two months old and thriving, as depicted in the attached images.



Kyokuroraho Produce Group's journey reflects not only a commitment to agricultural endeavors but also a testament to the power of unity and collaboration. As they continue to cultivate success together, the group serves as an inspiration for others in the community, showcasing the potential for positive transformation through collective effort and a forward-thinking approach.

REBECCA, A MOTHER IN BYABAKORA ZONE, THRIVES WITH NUTRITION EDUCATION AND CARE GROUP APPROACH FOR MCHN

By Eric Oteba,

Nutrition Officer, Kyaka II Refugee Settlement

Rebecca Anyesi, a 37-year-old mother of five children, is a member of the Tujikaze care group in Byabakora cell 2. This care group is supported by the Kabarole Research and Resource Centre (KRC-Uganda) as part of the Maternal Child Health and Nutrition (MCHN+) intervention. Two of Rebecca's children are under five years old, and one of them, below the age of two, benefits from the World Food Program (WFP)-funded MCHN project implemented by KRC-Uganda.



Rebecca shared how she utilized the nutrition and health education sessions offered during MCHN clinic days at Byabakora health outpost and the care group sessions. These sessions emphasized self-reliance among refugees by encouraging the establishment of vegetable gardens for year-round produce. Rebecca employs an effective model known as the Optimise Land Use Model (OLUM), allowing her to cultivate plenty of vegetables in a relatively small piece of land.

Expressing her gratitude, Rebecca stated, "I am very thankful to KRC-Uganda for providing me with knowledge on how to produce my vegetables at home. I can now ensure that my family consumes vegetables daily, along with other nutritious foods. Additionally, I can sell the surplus to generate additional income for other household necessities. Thanks to the knowledge I have obtained, none of my children will suffer from micronutrient deficiencies or any other form of malnutrition."

Rebecca is a member of a care group consisting of fifteen other members and a Village Health Team (VHT). They gather monthly to share experiences and discuss ways to improve the nutrition, livelihood, and general well-being of their households. Through these care group engagements, Rebecca and her colleagues receive routine knowledge on the benefits of vegetable growing, immunization, smallholder animal husbandry (specifically rabbit rearing), optimal hygiene and sanitation, maintaining a healthy plate, and the importance of Antenatal and Postnatal care. KRC-Uganda collaborates with other partners in the settlement, such as World Vision, JESE/CARE, Medical Teams, and NSAMIZI, to enhance Household Food Security, Nutrition, Health, and WASH practices for the most vulnerable communities in the Byabakora zone.

ALL BECAUSE OF YOU

"Thank you, dear subscribers, for being the heartbeat of our newsletter community. Your support fuels our commitment to sharing inspiring stories and valuable insights with you!"