



July, 2025

NEWSLETTER

Editor's note

As we mark another six months, we take a moment to reflect on our journey, celebrating successes and learning from challenges. In this bi-annual reflection, we explored key milestones, insights, and lessons that have shaped our path. With the leadership of our Executive Director Mr Mohammed Ahmed Shariff, we reflected upon our inward vision which defines our work and purpose as the leading research, advocacy and community development organization. This laid a foundation to inform our discussions by rating all our endeavors within the communities based on how much our work has contributed to research, advocacy and empowering of communities. Through such thoughtful analysis and honest reflection, we aimed to distill wisdom, identify areas for improvement, and reaffirm our commitment to growth and excellence.

In Rhino camp, KRC-Uganda through the STEPS project is reaching to children, women and youth through approaches such as Early Adolescent Skills for Emotions (EASE) in order to promote mental wellbeing from the traumas that such individuals face, this has built resilience, confidence and hope within refugee communities. As we share these stories, we gain insight into the refugee experience, challenging stereotypes and fostering a deeper appreciation for the strength and courage that defines their lives. By sharing their voices, we hope to inspire a more inclusive and supportive community.

Kansemire's story illustrates the transformative power of economic empowerment trainings for refugees. Her transition from a financially struggling housewife to a thriving farmer is a testament to the strength of community support and skills development initiatives.

As we navigate the complexities of the modern life, prioritizing nutrition has never been more important. KRC-Uganda with support from Iles de paix are promoting nutrition education within schools through carrying out practical cooking sessions empowering children with knowledge and skills to prepare nutritious meals and to make better decisions regarding their diets and feeding.

Kato Umil Omal
Documentation & Communication Officer

HOPE AMIDST HARDSHIP: LIFE IN EDEN ZONE, RHINO CAMP SETTLEMENT

July, 2025



Compiled By
Jacinta Maria

EASE Project Officer

In the quiet heat of a July afternoon, Eden Village in Rhino Camp Settlement hums with activity. Children laugh as they kick a makeshift ball through dusty pathways, women gather near boreholes to fetch water, and elders rest under neem trees, sharing stories of home and displacement. For over a decade, Rhino Camp has been a haven for thousands of South Sudanese refugees fleeing conflict, and Eden Zone is one of its most vibrant and hopeful communities.

Eden Zone is home to over 6,000 refugees and the number continues to grow despite the challenges faced by its residents. Most refugees arrive, fleeing violence in South Sudan. Today, the community is marked by resilience, a strong sense of kinship, and ongoing efforts to build a better future from within.

Some of the challenges and sparks of resilience with the communities

Access to education and healthcare remains limited. The local primary school, built with support from international NGOs, is overcrowded and understaffed. “We have over 100 students per class, and the children are eager to learn, they know education is the key to success.” says a volunteer teacher from the host community. The nearest healthcare center serves both refugees and the host population, leading to long waits and medicine shortages. Despite this, volunteer health promoters from the community work tirelessly to raise awareness on hygiene, maternal care, and disease prevention.

Food and Livelihoods, The World Food Programme continues to provide monthly food rations, however reductions due to global funding cuts have forced many families to rely on small-scale farming and casual labour. With support from humanitarian partners, Eden Zone residents have begun establishing backyard gardens and small cooperatives to improve food security.

One such initiative is the Eden Youth Agriculture Group, led by 24-year-old refugee. “We farm vegetables like okra and sukuma wiki,” he says proudly. “It helps us feed our families and earn a little income.”

Voices of Hope

Amidst the challenges, hope thrives. Women groups are organizing skill-sharing workshops in tailoring and soap-making. Youth have been trained by KRC- UGANDA team that has engaged them in different plays under Team up and Early Adolescent Skills for Emotions (EASE) intervention that promote peace and mental health. “Our past is painful, but Eden Zone is becoming a place of healing. We are more than refugees. We are builders of our future.” says a community member and mother of four.

As Uganda continues to uphold its open-door policy for refugees, Eden Zone stands as a testament to the strength of the human spirit. Even if the needs are many, the community’s determination to thrive, not just survive, lights the path forward.

Environmental Greening in Rhino Settlement: Empowering Communities and Children through The STEPS Project

July, 2025



Compiled by
Bwesigwa Hillary

M&E Officer, STEPS Project

Children take lead in the Environmental greening initiative in Rhino Refugee settlement Camp

In my role as the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for the STEPS project, I had the opportunity to closely observe and support the execution, and follow-up of this greening initiative. It was encouraging to witness children actively engaging in the planting process, demonstrating that environmental action can start early and be inclusive. Their involvement was both educational and symbolic helping them understand the value of trees, climate action, and their role in protecting their environment.

The activity focused on planting a variety of indigenous and fruit trees in the community. The trees will provide multiple long-term benefits, including improved air quality, shade, erosion control, and a strengthened sense of community responsibility for natural resources.

Through the STEPS project's protection lens, this greening activity also serves a broader purpose: creating safer and healthier spaces for children and vulnerable individuals within the settlement. By integrating tree planting into child-focused and community-led initiatives, we not only promote environmental sustainability but also contribute to psychosocial well-being and community cohesion.

We employed a participatory M&E approach to ensure accountability and sustainability. Tree survival will be tracked through routine follow-ups by community structures trained under the project, including project volunteers and child protection committees. In addition, children have been encouraged to take an active role in caring for the planted trees, fostering long-term stewardship.

This activity stands as a testament to KRC-UGANDA's commitment to delivering impactful, locally led protection responses under the STEPS project. By involving children in meaningful environmental action, we are planting more than trees we are planting a future rooted in resilience, awareness, and shared responsibility.



Supporting in planting of an Orange fruit tree in Eden zone

As we continue implementing the STEPS project, we remain guided by the principles of sustainability, inclusion, and community empowerment, and we look forward to expanding similar greening efforts across the settlement in partnership with local actors and community members.



Esperance Kansemire, 46-year-old married woman, originally from Congo, currently hails from Itambabiniga Ruchinga in Kyaka II Refugee settlement in Kyegegwa district with her five children and husband.

"Before joining the Kulea Watoto project, our lives were marked by struggle and uncertainty. I didn't know how to care for my children and husband, and we faced domestic violence and financial hardship. My husband's failing health made it difficult for him to provide for our family, and our children were not attending school due to our inability to afford school fees." Esperance Kansemire narrated.

"In November 2023, my husband and I learned about the Kulea Watoto project, through the Refugee Welfare Council of Itambabiniga Ruchinga. Kulea Watoto is a project implemented by Kabarole Research and Resource Centre in partnership with the International Rescue Committee. I was among the fortunate individuals selected to benefit from the project, along with other neighbors. We formed a parent group consisting of eight households and 16 people. The project staff provided us with valuable training on various topics, including balanced diet, immunization, child spacing, food and cooking demonstration sessions household economy, livestock management, Village Saving and Loan Association and dealing with financial stress which has enabled my family members to cope with financial challenges, overcome domestic violence, value the importance of taking children to school and explore different business ideas".

"As part of the project, I was given the opportunity to engage in a participatory session where my husband and I selected a sheep. I am pleased to report that the sheep is thriving well, has given birth to 3 lambs. As a family, we have plans of rearing many sheep as these can be sold off in later years and use the money to set up a business where we can easily earn daily income to cater for our most urgent needs like food, clothes, education and health care".

"The Kulea Watoto project has been a game-changer for my family. We have gained valuable knowledge, skills, and resources that have improved our lives and enabled us to become more self-sufficient. I appreciate the efforts of Kulea Watoto and looking forward to continuing our journey towards a brighter future".

From Bean to Brand: How Vanilla Cooperatives Are Claiming Their Place in the Market

“Marketing doesn’t start at the sale it starts when a farmer plants the first vanilla vine.”

July, 2025



Compiled by
Carol Namagembe
Production and Marketing Officer,
VIBRANT Project

That simple truth sparked a powerful shift in Butwaka Village, Bundibugyo District, during a two-day training with the Bukonzo Vanilla, Cocoa and Coffee Farmers' Cooperative. They were one of 15 vanilla cooperatives across Uganda's Rwenzori Region that received two days of practical, hands-on training under the Vanilla Initiative for Building Resilience and Nurture Thriving Communities (VIBRANT) Project an initiative implemented by KRC-Uganda and funded by Enabel, the Belgian Development Agency.

Through these sessions, 135 cooperative leaders including 60 women and 75 men were empowered to lead with confidence, improve their marketing strategies, and strengthen their cooperative governance.

Growing More Than Vanilla Growing Confidence

The Bukonzo cooperative, with 67 members (35 youth and 32 women), had the passion and potential, but lacked reliable market access and strong internal systems. Over two intensive days, we worked closely with their nine executive leaders using tools like the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) and the PIP (Planning, Implementation, and Progress) Approach to help them plan collectively, build trust, and envision a stronger future.

Reimagining Marketing with the 4Ps

We took a deep dive into the Four Ps of Marketing, tailoring each to the real challenges and opportunities faced by vanilla cooperatives:

- **Product:** Quality, aroma, and traceability are key. Buyers care about who grows the vanilla, how it's handled, and whether it meets international standards.
- **Price:** We taught leaders how to calculate production costs and profit margins so they can negotiate prices that reflect the true value of their product.
- **Place:** Getting vanilla to the right buyers means understanding logistics, storage, and the right channels whether local, regional, or export.
- **Promotion:** Cooperatives explored branding, packaging, and storytelling how to make their vanilla stand out through social media, trade fairs, and more.

From Theory to Action

In one of the most powerful moments, leaders role-played real-life sales meetings. One acted as the cooperative's marketer, the other as a potential buyer. They pitched, negotiated, and promoted their product with confidence putting new skills into immediate practice.

The Impact So Far

- 135 executive leaders trained from 15 cooperatives in Bundibugyo, Ntoroko, and Kasese
- Each cooperative received two days of tailored training; Day 1 on governance and store management, Day 2 on vanilla marketing
- Improved leadership, financial systems, and trust among members
- Youth and women leading the way with energy, creativity, and strong participation

What's Next?

The momentum is strong. With follow-up mentorship, simplified reporting tools, and refresher sessions planned, these cooperatives are on a path to:

- Build structured marketing and governance systems
- Increase access to reliable buyers and better prices
- Elevate the voice and visibility of Uganda's vanilla farmers especially youth and women

Because when a cooperative understands how to market its vanilla, it doesn't just grow profits it grows power, pride, and long-term resilience.



Sorting vanilla beans by size. Longer beans are more valuable

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Saving for health trainings in Bundibugyo district.

Compiled by
Tumwesige Gerald
Extension officer Bundibugyo

Importance of Saving for Health for Farmers

Saving for health means setting aside money regularly to cover medical expenses when they arise. For farmers and rural communities, this practice is important due to the nature of their work and limited access to affordable healthcare. Saving for health is crucial for farmers, as their livelihoods depend on physical strength and well-being. Here are key reasons why saving for health is important:

Unpredictable Nature of Illness; Farmers are often exposed to harsh working conditions, injuries, and diseases. Without savings, even minor health issues can lead to major financial setbacks.

Reduces Dependency on Loans; Medical emergencies often force farmers to borrow money at high interest rates. Having health savings reduces the need for emergency loans and helps protect their assets.

Ensures Continuity of Farm Activities; When farmers or their family members fall sick, farm work can be interrupted. Health savings ensure quick access to treatment, thus minimizing work disruptions.

Protects Household Income; Healthcare expenses can drain income meant for farming inputs, school fees, or food. Savings help maintain financial stability during medical challenges.

Enables Preventive Care; With some savings, farmers can afford regular check-ups, vaccinations, and good nutrition, which reduce the risk of serious illness.

Promotes Peace of Mind; Knowing that money is set aside for health emergencies reduces stress and anxiety, allowing farmers to focus on productive activities.

Improves Quality of Life; Healthy farmers are more productive, energetic, and able to make better decisions, which leads to better yields and income.

Encouraging farmers to save specifically for health is a smart investment in their productivity, household well-being, and resilience against unforeseen challenges. Farmer groups, SACCOs, or Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) can help promote and support this practice effectively.

Cooking Up Change: How Culinary Skills in Schools Are Strengthening Uganda's Food Systems

July, 2025



Hands-on cooking lesson at Kasisi Pri. Sch

*Compiled by
Nalunkuuma Sharon
Food Systems & Nutrition Program Manager*

In Uganda, where over 60% of children in public schools rely on school meals for daily nutrition, food education is becoming just as vital as math or science. With funding from the Government of Luxembourg, and in partnership with Iles de Paix and KRC Uganda, schools are using the Food Systems Lab model to teach practical culinary skills, right from the garden to the plate.

During the planned food and nutrition school activities at 5 public schools in Fort Portal City, Kabarole district, students proudly arrived with bundles of vegetables, fruits, and grains from their family gardens. These were no ordinary crops; they were Rwenzori Fresh foods, grown using agroecological methods with minimal or no pesticides. This approach not only promotes healthier diets but also supports sustainable farming practices at the household level.



Students of kasisi and Karambi Primary Schools, showcasing foods prepared

Wearing aprons, recipe books in hand and wide smiles, students chopped, stirred, steamed and boiled meals featuring indigenous carbohydrates, vegetables, fruit salads, and protein-rich dishes. They also learned about food hygiene, food safety, balanced nutrition. These sessions impart essential knowledge in a country where only 28% of schools have nutrition education integrated into their curriculum. "It feels good knowing the food we eat is healthy and grown at home," said one student from Karambi Primary School, Fort Portal City.

With both girls and boys actively involved, the program promotes gender inclusion and a shared sense of responsibility around food.

By connecting school kitchens with home gardens and agroecological values, this initiative is helping shape a new generation of youth, skilled, health-conscious, and committed to building a resilient local food system.

OUR DEAR

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Dear Subscribers and Esteemed Donors, As we reflect on the strides made and the challenges overcome, we extend our deepest gratitude to you— our invaluable supporters. Your unwavering commitment and generosity have been the cornerstone of our success in driving sustainable change and improving lives in the communities we serve. Thank you for being part of our journey. Together, we are transforming lives, strengthening communities, and building a brighter future for all.

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