

CWS Christmas Appeal 2009

Give Us a Chance

Feature Partner:

Centre for Community Solidarity, Uganda



Uganda Overview

With a stable government and growing economy, the situation in Uganda as a whole is better than many



of its neighbours. However, the country is not without its problems. With a population now approaching 32 million, there is growing pressure on resources. Negotiations with the notorious Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which fought a rebellion in the north and used children as

soldiers and sex slaves, have stalemated. In February 2008, the LRA and government signed a permanent ceasefire but a final peace agreement remains elusive as the LRA fails to attend signing ceremonies. Much work is needed to reintegrate people caught up in the conflict who have spent years in camps. The long-term impact of HIV and AIDS also continues to exact a heavy price on communities. A generation of working age adults has been lost, leaving many elderly people caring for orphans and other vulnerable children.

Oruchinga Valley: The Problem

Lack of fresh, accessible water for drinking

The people of Uganda's Oruchinga Valley, in the southwest of the country, suffer a severe shortage of fresh drinking water year after year. The valley is home to 72,000 but only 17 per cent of the population can get clean, safe water. Without clean water, any effort to reduce or eradicate poverty and improve the standard of living will fail. Women and children in particular will continue to suffer. Antagonism between locals and refugees over water will persist. Extreme water shortages exacerbate the widespread poverty.

The terrain of the valley and surrounding district is dominated by hills, valleys, and steep slopes and has only the Kagera River as a permanent water source. The valley is dry with no prospect of a large-scale water supply being installed. The area provides little potential for boreholes, springs, or gravity-fed schemes. While the alluvial soils in the valley are

fertile, allowing widespread cultivation of bananas and some coffee, the highly mineralised soils have made the groundwater unsuitable for human consumption. Many people have to fetch water from the Kagera River 8km away, enduring an uphill hike home carrying a 20 litre jerrycan. The valley has a high incidence of waterborne diseases.

Although most households are poor, they usually have a small plot to grow bananas for domestic consumption. Any surplus is sold to small traders who transport it to Kampala for sale, generating at least a little cash for the family. Due to the extreme shortage of water, most households in the Oruchinga have very few animals, reducing their prospects of improved livelihoods. The area was badly affected by fighting during the Idi Amin era in the 1970s. It still struggles to recover.

Oruchinga Valley: The Solution Rainwater Tank Project

The solution is to collect rainwater. Annual rainfall in the valley ranges from 80cm to 120cm, spread over two rainy seasons. Collected in a tank, this amounts to enough of the precious resource to sustain a family's domestic use for a year. The Centre for Community Solidarity Uganda aims to improve the health and wellbeing of over 500 people in households made up of orphans, other vulnerable children and their caregivers by funding rainwater tanks and teaching them hygiene and sanitation.

Staff at the centre have overseen the building of 150 cement tanks with 6000 litre capacity for these families. The tanks provide all the family's essential water needs. CCS Uganda's goal is to build 150 of these cement tanks over 12 months. Around 500 people, including over 350 orphans and other vulnerable children, are now getting improved access to clean water through this programme. CCS Uganda is also planning to provide tanks and water supplies for Congolese refugees who fled to Uganda from the war in their home country and are unlikely to return home in the foreseeable future.

Already, the ability to collect rainwater from the roofs of their small houses has significantly enhanced the lives of valley residents. A rainwater tank saves women and children much time and energy going to the river. It also frees them from the risk and fear of sexual attack while out collecting water.

A home-based water supply makes it possible to keep a home garden. Families can run livestock and poultry at home, improving their nutrition. Greater availability of water and its higher quality leads to better health for children, who are particularly susceptible to common – and sometimes fatal - waterborne diseases like diarrhoea.

As well, CCS Uganda holds classes promoting hygiene, improved sanitation and HIV and AIDS prevention for around 500 participants each year. Through CWS, your support gives people the chance to not only improve their lives but possibly save them.



Young women carrying water tanks



Man inscribing CWS on water tank



Completed water tank



Children in the Kyezimine carers group



Livestock kept as result of improved water supply