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Jesus we praise you for those going deeper for #GenderJustice bit.ly/2biWGLy #PrayMonday #Justice



Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing. . . . No more let sin and sorrow grow, nor thorns infest the ground; he comes to make his blessings flow, far as the curse is found . . . !

Nearly every Ugandan knows this Christmas carol—in any local language there is. And, listening to it right now, I can't help consenting that indeed this is a time to be joyful, a time to embrace the hope of our world, Jesus Christ! And for us here in Uganda this has manifested itself in many forms. Our partner communities in southwestern Uganda are celebrating an ingenious way that has finally enabled them to bring men together and to openly address issues pertaining to HIV/AIDS among them. A young man is celebrating an opportunity that has given him the courage to face drought and not be so scared of food scarcity. And in Bidibidi camp, in spite of dire needs and worries, there is celebration for a new war-free home and the availability of latrines. Please celebrate with us as you read these stories you have helped to create. Let them remind you of this joyful season where we can, with confidence, sing at the top of our voices, "No more let sin and sorrow grow," for, "joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King."



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Many of you have read about my recent hire as Ministry Team Leader for East Africa. I have heard that I am an answered prayer for the team. I joined World Renew on November 1, 2016 and after already six weeks on the job, I would like to thank everyone for welcoming me so warmly and for helping me get oriented as fast as possible. Since I have not had the opportunity to introduce myself to you all, I would like to use this space to tell you more about myself.

I am a Pastor's wife and we have two daughters, Cynthia (21) and Winnie (14). My husband Gladson Samuel Kayanja and I are the senior pastors of Muyenga Miracle Center Church, a growing church that started out with about eight people meeting in my parents sitting room. Our numbers grew until we could not sit in this room, so we moved to their veranda, then outside to the compound, then a tent, and now a beautiful church building. We are a community church that has continued to grow in numbers and is reaching many for Christ.

Before joining World Renew as Ministry Team Leader for East Africa, I provided leadership and oversight for regional teams with Global Health Corps, where I worked as the Africa Regional Director overseeing program implementation in Africa, and Trickle Up, as the East Africa Representative overseeing program implementation in East Africa. I have managed country teams with Gatsby Micro-finance Limited and program teams with the Poverty Alleviation Project and Mpigi Community Based Health Care Program in Uganda.

I bring with me experience gained working with organizations focusing on micro enterprise development, village savings and loan associations, asset transfer programs, micro-finance, community based health care including primary health care and water and sanitation, and most recently global health leadership.

I am looking forward to serving in this capacity with the East Africa Ministry Team so that together we can renew hope, reconcile lives, and bring about restoration in the communities we serve.

Boosting the Youth with Village Savings

A Story of Transformation *by Edward Okiror*

As we come to the end of 2016 and begin the festive season, I would like to thank you for supporting the work we do among the communities in Uganda. It is so encouraging to see how God continues changing the lives of entire households.

This year, however, has been challenging to the farming communities here because many families have not had a good harvest, due to prolonged drought. Many did not harvest anything throughout the year! It was also challenging to me personally that my wife of 20 years passed on to be with our Lord. The Scripture that has been alive in me is Joshua 1:9: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

I was recently encouraged when I visited some of the households, that amid the scorching sun and drying immature crops in their fields, some could still say, "I do not

fear this drought, my family is well prepared." The introduction of the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) has played a key role in building resilience in these communities, whose farming groups meet weekly to save money.

Echiku Bosco, a 28-year-old man, is a member in one of the 100 VSLA groups (with just over 2,000 total members) that we support in eastern Uganda with the Pentecostal Assemblies of God of North Teso and of Kaberamaido, two of our partners. Using the sales from his farm produce and a loan from the VSLA group he belongs to, Bosco started a retail shop of his own. His business is running so successfully that he has already paid off his loan, and the profits from the business are really helping him survive during this time of food scarcity.

He explains, "It was very hard being just a farmer in this changing climate. When this VSL program came along, I did not hesitate

to join, since I had seen the benefits of saving toward personal development from other members in similar VSL groups. In my group I got one of the very first loans of 200,000 Uganda shillings, and I started a small retail shop. I also sold some of my farm produce and raised a total of 320,000 shillings, which I used to add to the stock."

Bosco plans to enlarge his business using the profits he has earned and the proceeds of the sales of more farm produce. He plans also to buy livestock (cattle and goats) for the bride price for his marriage. "I don't want to stop at this alone. This VSL program has built my capacity as a community facilitator, and I want to be seen as a role model," he adds.

May the Lord bless you for standing with my family in 2016. It has been a tough year, but it is full of God's grace!

Merry Christmas and happy new year from Edward, David, Benjamin, and Jesse.

Getting back to the Roots: Ekikome

A Story of Transformation *by Raymond Mutava*

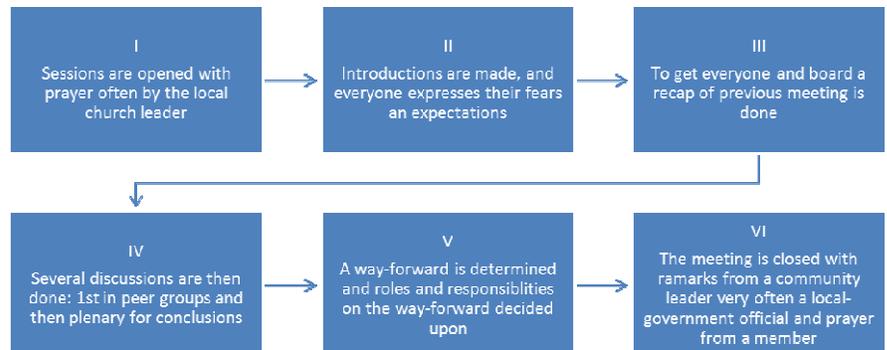
Back in the day, issues pertaining to communities were conducted at a "round table" called "Ekikome" in the Rukiga language in southwestern Uganda. The Ekikome meeting originated from the Bakiga culture's way of socialization. After a hard day, elders would gather together with young ones around the fire and pass on the cultural norms and values to the children and youth, and address issues affecting the community. In the past those around the fire would be members of the same clan: family and blood relatives. A lot of fun stuff would take place around the informal gathering, like meat and maize roasting, sharing food, drinking of local porridge, educational storytelling, and sharing of proverbs and riddles. Older men would give words of counsel and advice to young men about marriage. It was a place where marriage conflicts would be resolved—the matter was never put aside until a viable solution had been identified. Young men were challenged to grow up and work hard. Wrongdoers were disciplined and punished. Planning for activities was done—young men planning for marriage would use this opportunity to raise funds for their wedding. It was an entertainment place that removed boredom and built people's talents like singing folk songs. It was a learning center where the young ones would get an opportunity to ask tough and sensitive questions and receive candid answers from elders. There was just no better way for en-

hancing community cohesion and community values.

Today World Renew Uganda and PAG Kabale Southwestern have revived this old tradition and are using it as a tool in their HIV innovation project in the villages of Kyanamira and Karujanga to address emerging community issues related to HIV causes, spread, prevention, and control. In this way they are fighting stigma and discrimination, as well as spiritual, social, and economically related issues that affect men deeply. Because the program targets men as the main beneficiaries, the Ekikome participants are mostly men, and they meet twice per month. Together with the Men Champions, the Community Development HIV Program coordinator will design and facilitate the Ekikome in a simple process, as below:



Male champions participating during Ekikome meetings in Kyanamira.



Finding Refuge in Bidibidi Camp, Uganda

By George and Toni Fernhout, International Relief Managers, World Renew International Disaster Response

Since the beginning of November the number of refugees entering the Bidibidi camp each day has at times exceeded 4,000 people—a number equal to the population of an average small town in Alberta arriving at your door with little else than the clothes on their backs. As of November 11, the total population at the Bidibidi camp rose to around 220,000 individuals. When we received the call from World Renew to travel to northern Uganda and assess the needs of the South Sudanese who were crossing the Ugandan border, we did not realize that we would be there within two weeks. World Renew, in partnership with TearAustralia and working through a local partner called Here is Life, had already completed a project in which 180 latrine/bathroom structures were built in the Bidibidi refugee camp. This camp was created on August 3 in response to the high number of refugees coming into Uganda from South Sudan and was meant to hold 42,000 refugees. By October 1, Bidibidi had called this area Zone 1 and had opened up Zone 2 and Zone 3 as a rise in the conflict in South Sudan led to many thousands more Sudanese being admitted to Bidibidi camp, as well as more being housed in other camps in Uganda.



South Sudan refugees settling in and finding refuge at Bidibidi Camp.

In Zone 3 at the Bidibidi Refugee Resettlement Camp we met Aisha Candiru. She was living in a small village in South Sudan when rebels entered the village under the cover of darkness and killed her husband. Somehow she managed to flee into the countryside with her 12-year-old daughter but does not know if her other children are alive or dead and has not heard from others of her village as to their whereabouts. After walking with other villagers for two days through the bush toward the nearest border, Aisha and her daughter crossed into Uganda, where they were registered and brought to Bidibidi. She is grateful that her daughter is able to go to school and that she lives here in a community of Christians. Life is difficult as she waits for news about her family, struggles with her asthma, and lines up patiently each day for water, but she is grateful to the Ugandan people and all who have helped the refugees. She is grateful to God for his protection and is able to give us a beautiful smile. Amazing faith and resilience are shown by many of the refugees; their first response is not to complain or to make demands but to express gratitude for what is being done for them.



UN World Toilet Day: Saturday, November 19

By George and Toni Fernhout, International Relief Managers, World Renew International Disaster Response

Why a toilet day?? It's urgent because 1 in 3 people on this planet still don't have access to a clean and safe toilet; 1,000 children die each day due to poor sanitation; and better sanitation supports better nutrition and improved health, especially for women and children.

We are pleased to report that the construction of all 350 latrine/bathroom units is almost complete. The last 79 units await tarps, which are in high demand but low in supply. An enormous supply of tarps is required for a camp this size, especially one that continues to grow daily. Tarps are required not just for the latrine/bathhouses but also for the temporary shelters each refugee family constructs—and for the temporary schools, medical centers, agency headquarters, and meeting places. There are now two reception centers in Bidibidi, each requiring structures to house incoming refugees, cooking shelters, eating shelters, and agency offices. The Ugandan factories that manufacture the tarps are finding it difficult to keep up with the high demand.



George and Elly, the HIL Executive Director, checking out a completed latrine unit.

“One refugee without hope is one too many” is the UNHRC theme for 2016, and this is a theme that Here Is Life (HIL) takes to heart. HIL staff who are working on the latrine project in the camp take every opportunity to engage with the refugees not only to listen to their stories but also to speak to them of the hope they need so that they can make plans for a future for themselves and their children. Many refugees are Christians, and efforts are made by HIL to assist in finding pastors or leaders who can organize support groups. The HIL executive director was able to share with the refugees his story of being a refugee in Sudan when he was in his teens, and he was thus able to empathize with them and encourage them not to give in to despair but to cling to hope. Another HIL staff member took time out of his busy schedule to drive ailing refugees on his motorcycle to health centers. They are clearly not just building toilets!



Digging the pit for the latrine.



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