



World Vision®

Uganda



Conserving the Environment for Food Security and Household Income – **World Vision Uganda approach in Karamoja Region**

NUSAF II

Foreword

World Vision Uganda (WVU) has the largest reach and most extensive community relations in Uganda, operating in 65 districts and reaching approximately six million children to deliver an integrated development and emergency programme which includes Health & Nutrition, Food Security & Community Resilience, Education and Child Protection. WVU leverages on the above strength to provide a truly comprehensive set of services to vulnerable families

World Vision Uganda with support from United Nations World Food Programme has been contributing to building resilient communities in Karamoja region (through food for work), so that they are better able to cope with recurrent shocks and stresses, notably drought and floods.

In writing this publication, World Visions' main objectives were to: help stakeholders understand our interventions under the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund II (NUSAF II) Programme being implemented in Karamoja region; and share the stories of transformation we have witnessed in our work as well as the best practices and the challenges.

Enjoy your reading

Gilbert Kamanga
National Director
World Vision Uganda

Acknowledgement

Our sincere appreciation goes to our donor, United Nations World Food Programme for the continued support to the people of Karamoja without them; this project would not be a success. We also extend the same appreciation to our support offices that have always provided the matching fund for this programme.

We are thankful to the government of Uganda from the office of the Prime Minister to the lower level local government in the communities where we implement this programme for mobilizing resources for the people of Karamoja as well as providing the favorable environment for implementation of this programme.

Lastly we thank all the World Vision Uganda colleagues in their various capacities for the continued support to this programme from implementation to the production of this publication.

Not forgetting is the almighty God for keeping us alive and providing the opportunity to serve his people.

Introduction

Deforestation and overgrazing remain the biggest threats to food security in the Northern Karamoja districts of Kotido, Kaabong and Abim. The search for grazing land, the need to meet insufficient fuel wood, fencing materials for the traditional Karamojong houses, locally known as 'manyatas' and income needs of the people are the main reasons for the high level of environmental degradation. Vegetation cover has been depleted in most of the communities exposing bare land with scanty vegetation, making the soils prone to soil erosion.

During rainy seasons, running water carries away fertile soils and creates gully leaving a large portion of land unproductive for crop production, destroying roads and farmlands - down the channel/slops. The effects of gully erosion have resulted into reduction of the productive land under agriculture-crop production and productive land for livestock grazing resulting to food insecurity. World Vision Uganda through the NUSAF II Project came up with an idea of providing food for the food insecure community members after offering labour to public assets like roads, planting trees and reclaiming land to proper use.



One of the water ponds constructed through food for work in Potongor parish



World Vision interventions under NUSAF II Project

The Northern Uganda Action Fund (NUSAF II) is a drought response project in the Northern Karamoja districts of Abim, Kotido and Kaabong since 2009. The programme is funded by the World Food Programme and currently implemented by World Vision in Kaabong district. In its fourth phase now, the programme targets the moderately food insecure households with conditional food transfers dubbed “Food for Work”. In this approach, community members create assets including tree nurseries and woodlots owned by the communities themselves.

Through the created community assets such as rock catchment, more water has been made available to community both to the direct and indirect beneficiaries of NUSAF II Project. Additionally, the reclaimed soil through gully treatment has been used by the community for household food production and in other areas the vegetation regenerated through FMNR serves as fodder for animals. In NUSAF II phase IV, for instance, a total of 17.75 acreages of drought resistant trees have also been planted.

The project approach was that community members provide the stones, sand, vegetative materials and labour, while World Vision/WFP provides the necessary tools and materials as well as the skills, knowledge and leadership. According to an official from World Food Programme: “people have been given free food for a long time but they had no alternative for livelihood. So we started a concept of working on ponds, roads and wood lots to get food focusing on food insecure areas. The emphasis now is the quality of work and to see that there are better projects that meet the future aspirations of the communities especially those that address drought.”



Food for Work participant extracting neem tree portion for medicine

Success story: Food for work boosts food security in households



FFW participants checking on a Nursery Bed

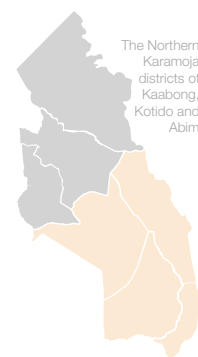
Feeding a family in Karamoja region is a daunting task for many households as food is scarce and when you get it, it is expensive to buy. It is not uncommon to find families surviving on one meal a day and at times even nothing.

World Vision reports indicate that the contributors of food insecurity in the region include erratic rains, prolonged drought, land degradation as well as limited knowledge and skills for improved agricultural farming.

Betty Adong, a mother of six in Kalapata Sub County Kaabong district, for long has had to work in a gold mine to earn a penny to buy food for her family.

“It was not easy, at times I do not make any money and that means my family would go without food so I could just gather some fruits from the bush and give the children,” says Betty adding: “When a child falls sick and I take them to the hospital, the other children left at home would have to stay hungry because I will not have worked.”

But thanks to the NUSAF II programme where people work to earn food, Betty can now feed her



family on at least one meal a day. Betty joined the NUSAF II programme in July 2014 and has since been getting food rations whenever they work. The group members are currently raising 45,000 fruit trees which will be distributed among 90 group members. Other tree species being raised include grevillea robusta, acacia Senegal, neem and calliandra.

Once mature, not only will the fruits be consumed and sold but also the trees used for fuel wood, fencing materials for the community, medicine as well as controlling soil erosion. World vision also provides vegetable seeds as part of household income support in addition to providing the tools for public work

Betty and her group members work 10-15 hours a week in the tree seedlings as well as growing fast growing vegetables like kale.

"I no longer worry about providing food for my family. Every after a working cycle (45 days days) I get 50kg of maize. I use it to make porridge for the children at breakfast and lunch time while the rest of the family we have one meal in the evening," says Betty.

Betty is now a happy mother. When she is not working at the NUSAF project, she is doing household chores like washing and cleaning. She also plans on selling some vegetables if the harvest is good.

"I will use the money to buy some scholastic materials for the children and some necessities in the house," she says. In the current phase being implemented in Kaabong district, 1729 targeted households have been given vegetable seeds as part of household income support.

With hope of creating more productive agricultural land, community members are trained to reclaim gully. Through the NUSAF II programme, World Vision is Empowering communities to regenerate and/or reclaim degraded land through various approaches including gully treatment and farmer managed natural regeneration.

Farmer managed natural regeneration is basically growing trees using tree stumps and has been broadened to involve regenerating the whole area where the tree stumps are found. Combinations of stone structures and vegetative measures are used to reclaim the gully. These structures reduce the speed of runoff due to erosion hence its effect.

Ekra Komenan, the World Vision Commodities Manager says that the Water harvesting facilities are meant to hold and store rain water for at least three months in the dry season when water is very scarce. The dry spell runs for about seven months between October and April. In the sub counties where World Vision works, there is at least one water pond per sub-county to serve the communities and it is worth noting that in the dry spell, this is the only source of water in the area for domestic use, livestock and crop production.

"The demand for water is very high and coupled with the high evaporation rates, water is exhausted within a short time," Mr Komenan says adding that in some months nothing is even stored since people collect and use the water as it collects.

Success story: Gully treatment saves land from environment degeneration

Hellen Lemu's land currently sits in the middle of a huge gully . Before she embarked on the gully treatment she watched helplessly as her land was eroded from all sides and what started as a small depression soon expanded to form gigantic valley currently surrounding her land.

"The gully started forming about 10 years ago; I did not know what to do about it. Every year my land for cultivation would become smaller because a huge part was washed away by running water," says Hellen a resident of Kalapata sub- County in Kaabong district.

Hellen also says that she suffered dwindling crop yields every subsequent year as the soil lost nutrients due to massive erosion. Her problems soon came to an end when she approached World Vision for help after a sensitisation exercise.

"One day after we had completed work to excavate a water dam, World Vision staff asked if we had challenges with soil erosion and I directed them to my land," says Hellen of her turning point.

Through the help of World Vision with funds from the World Food Programme, concrete and vegetative structures were built and grown respectively in the gully channel on Hellen's land to control the erosion .

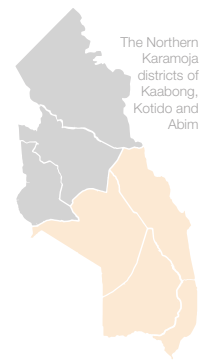
Ronald Toorach the World Vision Agriculture Officer says that the idea is for the vegetation to lower the speed of runoff which reduces gully erosion in the channel.

"If the erosion is not controlled we will have more land degraded which means less productive land for farming and livestock grazing," says Mr Toorach.

He further explains that erosion and its effects are high in Northern Karamoja partly due to the poor land use practices including over grazing on the same piece of land and rampant cutting of trees for constructing fences in homesteads and for firewood. According to government statistics, over 70 percent of land where people have settled is degraded following the insecurity in the region that forced populations to concentrate in particular areas.

Today, several farmers in Karamoja like Hellen are now happy with their crop yields; their land is safe from erosion and many have acquired knowledge on how to control the soil erosion by themselves. The need for land reclamation and environment regeneration, however, remains huge as the beneficiaries are just a small fraction of the many people affected.





Success story: Rock catchments and dams bring water closer to communities in Karamoja region



Community members of Lookorok parish fetching water from the rock catchment

It used to take Acela Labolia about three hours to fetch water from the nearest water point (5km away) to her home. Acela had to collect water at least twice a day for household chores, brewing beer and drinking. This meant that she spent about six hours each day fetching water alone which subsequently affected her ability to do other activities like farming or even preparing a meal for the family.

“When a child falls sick and I took her to the hospital, it meant that no work goes on at home. There would be no cooking, washing clothes or utensils since I will not have fetched water,” says Acela, a resident of Enik village in Kaabong district. “If I fail to make local beer due to lack of water, it means that I cannot mobilise people to dig in my garden which affects my farming time,” she adds.

Acela is just one among thousands of women in Karamoja region whose life is tangled in struggles to fend for their families as well as get water to use at home. Unlike in urban areas where water is readily available at every corner, nearly the entire Karamoja population still grapples with access to water. As such people, especially women and children, find themselves spending a lot of time in search for water at the expense of other activities like farming or business that could improve livelihoods for the families. Many boreholes previously built have either broken down or dried up with just a hand full still in use.

It is for this reason that World Vision with funding from the World Food programme embarked on construction of massive water harvesting facilities that would increase access to safe water and water for production within the communities of Karamoja. Under the NUSAF 2 programme which has been implemented in Abim, Kotido and now Kaabong district, public work component has seen a number of water catchment facilities constructed – water ponds and rock catchments to harvest rain water during the rainy season.

The earth dams are meant to store water for livestock and crop production while the rock catchments store water for domestic use. Mr Komenan and Longwe Isaiah, Kalapata parish both agree, there is still a huge need for investment in water catchment in the region if there is to be meaningful impact on the communities. However, despite the inadequate water catchment facilities, locals like Acela and clan elders in the region are grateful for these facilities which they protect jealously.

The project has also enabled community members establish their own village saving and loan associations which are enabling them to save some money. Savings are being made by community members/groups through sale of the farmed produce which is done collectively. Group savings have provided members with loans to diversify into other activities such as vegetable production, bee hive, honey production and other income generating businesses.



Water harvesting facility - Rock Catchment constructed under NUSAF II Project



NUSAF II Best Practices / Way forward

Continuous engagement with local government and partners at project design and throughout the project implementation is very crucial. It is at this time that the different partners are able to identify and commit themselves on their roles. In this particular project, WFP and the Kaabong local government were very influential in the success of this project. World Food Programme provided the funding while the district availed its technical staff to train/advise, monitor and ensure implementation is per the agreed terms. World Vision provided the leadership and implementation of the project.

Okello John Bosco Kaabong District NUSAF Coordinator

"What World Vision is doing is in line with what the NUSAF project expects which is to improve livelihoods of people and conserve the environment. The vegetable gardens in the areas I have visited are well managed indicating that people have seen that vegetables can be a source of income which can improve their lives. The woodlots are still growing, are well kept and there is a sign that in future people will grow the trees on their own. The World Vision programmes have good intentions for the community geared towards poverty eradication and for people to be able to grow their own food. What is on the ground is however insufficient to address the problem in Kaabong district. The programme is only in two sub counties yet we have 14 sub counties in the district, there is still need in the remaining sub counties."

Involving communities' right from the start to agree on their roles is key to the success of the project. First of all community members need to agree that the approach the project is undertaking is beneficial to them in the long run and they are willing to commit their participation for future ownership and sustainability.

Logwee Isaiah, Kalapata Parish Chief:

"World Vision programmes are responding to the necessities of the communities and the approach used is good. The sensitization done before carrying out activities have made communities knowledgeable about various issues like health and education despite not going to school. The water dams have assisted people so much as many boreholes had dried up. The vegetable growing taking place is also solving the problem of hunger in the communities."

The integrated livelihood approach of asset development; environmental conservation; diversification of food production and household income seems to be working well as the local community is able to see multiple benefits of availability of food, creation of more land for cultivation through gully treatment, environment regeneration/conservation and availability of fodder/grass for their animals.

For future project and for sustainability purposes, individual households and smaller groups who have interest in implementing household income support project should be supported as opposed to targeting big group members who at times are only interested in the food rations.



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