Building a Sustainable Camp Project Feedback

Project Name: Building a Sustainable Camp

Project Leader: Zachariah Thon Mam Deng

Co-leader: Majuch Manyang Nyandiar

Funding received: 2000$

Progress Report date: 18/09/2025

Email: zachariathonmam@gmail.com

Project Overview

Growing up in Alere refugee camp, we witnessed firsthand the high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition prevalent, especially among women and children. This is due to the reduced food rations and lack of external support in reducing the overdependence on the monthly rations from the UNHCR. As part of their monthly ration, refugees receive cereals, cooking oil, and beans among other items and it happens that these items are used up by the middle of the month. Further compounding their struggles,refugees are sometimes forced to sell a portion of their food in order to pay for other necessities, including medicine, and often don't have enough food to feed their families until the next distribution. These factors have all contributed to the high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition observed within young children in Alere refugee settlement.

The Building a Sustainable Camp project aimed to address the existing problem of food insecurity and malnutrition in Alere Refugee Settlement, Adjumani District, Uganda, by empowering women through a kitchen garden initiative. The project specifically targeted vulnerable women from different ethnic groups within the camp and the surrounding host community, selecting 25 beneficiaries based on vulnerability criteria to ensure equitable access through a kitchen garden initiative to provide

diversified, nutritious food sources beyond the limited monthly rations. This was brought to fruition through funding from the UWC Go Make a Difference initiative. This report will highlight the success of the project,its challenges, and outline future plans for the project's sustainability.

Achievements

Through the funding we received from UWC Go Make a Difference, we are happy that we were able to achieve our primary goal of the project, which was to increase the availability of adequate food and reduce malnutrition rates by diversifying food sources through household-level vegetable production. We were able to set up one demonstration garden for the 25 women, where they could acquire practical skills and knowledge, such as how to prepare soil, select and plant a variety of vegetable seeds, manage pests organically, and maintain healthy garden beds.

Although the beneficiaries have not yet had their first harvest, the progress made so far in establishing kitchen gardens and empowering women within the Alere Refugee Settlement is a significant achievement in and of itself. The successful setup of productive kitchen gardens, along with training sessions on sustainable farming techniques and nutrition, lays a strong foundation for future harvests that are expected to improve food security and reduce malnutrition in the targeted households.

Additionally, we bought ten different varieties of vegetable seeds and distributed them to the beneficiaries. This helped them to grow different vegetables on their small pieces of land, given to them by UNHCR. We also bought different tools and distributed them to the women. I’m happy to report that all these were made possible through the funding made available by Go Make a Difference.

How you think you made a difference

Although the beneficiaries haven't done their first harvest, we were able to gather some success stories from some of the beneficiaries about how the project has impacted their lives. One of these stories is that of *Nyaruon Gatluak*, a young widow from the Nuer community who remarked, "*The training on how to create a kitchen garden has changed my life. I learned how to prepare the soil properly and manage pests without harmful chemicals from locally made pesticides. I feel proud that I can now take care of my family with food I have grown myself. This project has also connected me with other women in the camp, and we support one another in maintaining our gardens. It has brought us closer and made our community stronger.* "

Additionally, another beneficiary *Rabecca Ajok,* a mother of four children from the Dinka community, remarked that, "*Before joining the kitchen garden project, I struggled to feed my children a balanced diet because the monthly food rations were not enough and always the same. Now, by growing tomatoes, spinach, and carrots in our small garden, I expect my children to enjoy fresh vegetables every day and live a happy life. I may even sell some surplus produce to buy school supplies for my children, which wasn't possible before."*She thanked UWC Go Make a Difference for the support.

These stories and many others have proven to us the difference we made in our community through the kitchen garden initiative. I am happy refugees have gained vegetable growing skills and will boost their resilience while living in the refugee camp even though their food rations have been further reduced.

We are proud that we empowered vulnerable refugees and host community women in Alere Refugee Settlement to take control of their food security and nutrition. By equipping them with practical

gardening skills and nutritional knowledge, the project has transformed their role from passive recipients of aid to active contributors to their households' well-being, fostering self-sufficiency and confidence in a challenging environment. This project also created positive co-existence between the host community and the refugees since it was inclusive of the host community women.

Enduring Success of the Project

The "Building a Sustainable Camp" project in Alere Refugee Settlement empowers vulnerable women through kitchen gardening to combat food insecurity and malnutrition. By training women in sustainable gardening techniques, the project improves nutrition through diverse homegrown vegetables, reducing reliance on monthly food rations. This fosters community cohesion by encouraging cooperation among diverse ethnic groups and appointing local leaders to sustain the initiative. Economic benefits arise from selling surplus produce, resultantly enhancing family incomes.

During the implementation of our project, I reached out to several NGOs supporting refugees in the Adjumani district, including Action Against Hunger and the Lutheran World Federation, to discuss ways they might support the sustainability of our kitchen garden initiative. These organizations warmly appreciated our efforts to empower refugee women through this project. Although most of their ongoing programs were concluding at the time, they expressed a willingness to consider our beneficiaries for future funding opportunities. In the meantime, they have offered to provide training for the women, particularly focusing on pest management strategies, to help enhance the success and sustainability of the gardens.

Another significant success of the project was securing land for the demonstration garden from the school's garden. This addressed our initial challenge of limited space for setting up the garden for the

beneficiaries. The Headteacher kindly granted permission for the women to continue cultivating their vegetables there, noting that the school is currently not using the garden space. This generous support has provided a stable and accessible location for the demonstration garden since it is next to a water point, allowing the women to practice and showcase sustainable gardening techniques, and ensuring the project's sustainability within the community.

How has the project made a difference for you and the project team?

The "Building a Sustainable Camp" project has profoundly impacted both the project team and me by deepening our understanding of the challenges faced by refugee communities and strengthening our commitment to making a meaningful difference. Personally, growing up in a refugee camp and volunteering as a Community Nutrition Volunteer(CNV) to assist malnourished children, this project provided an opportunity to bring my dream of reducing malnutrition and food insecurity into action by empowering women with practical skills to improve food security and nutrition. It has enhanced our leadership, project management, and community engagement abilities, instilling confidence that grassroots initiatives can foster long-term positive change. As a team, we are inspired by the tangible improvements in beneficiaries' lives and the unity fostered within diverse communities, motivating us to continue advocating for sustainable solutions in refugee contexts. We are grateful to UWC Go Make a Difference for supporting this impactful journey and the positive change it has created.

Budget Outlay

The budget presented in the report was made on the estimate of 1$ = 3700(UGX) based on the market prices when the project was written. Below is the breakdown of the expenses we initially incurred.

1. **Table of Budget presented in the project**

Name of the item	Quantity(Details)	Price per item in Uganda shillings(UGX)	Total amount in Uganda shillings(UGX)	Total in USD($)
Site preparation materials	Land clearing, mulches, leveling and soil testing, meeting with host community leaders	495,000	495,000	$134
Seeds and seedlings	Varieties:Tomatoes, spinach, lettuce, cabbage, eggplant,watermelon, onions, amaranth,carrot, okra,etc	1 packet of each vegetable seed = 5,700 and we're planning to buy 30 packets for 10 different seeds (5700x30x10)	1,710,000	$462
Tools	Shovels, hoes, rakes, watering can,and other small gardening tools	Watering can-(10,000x25) Rakes-(15,000x25) Hoes-(25,000x25) Shovels-(30,000x5) Wheelbarrows-(150,000*2)	1,700,000	$459
Soil amendments (compost, fertilizers)	Organic compost basic fertilizers, pesticides	Organic compost(6bagsx60,000) Fertilizers(4bagsx100,000) Pesticides(2 bottles*30,000)	820,000	$221
Construction material (wood for bed)	Wood for garden beds, nails, measuring tapes	Wood(12x50,000) Nails(8kgx25,000) Measuring tapes(9x15,000)	935,000	$252
Training (Hiring an expert, materials, workshop supplies)	Hiring an expert, workshop training materials and refreshment for 25 people	580,000 for an expert and 520,000 for training and refreshments	1000,000	$270
Transportation costs	Transport of materials to the site	281,200	281,200	$76
Labour	Casual labor for land clearing, bed construction, planting (2 weeks)	50,000 per worker (8 workers)	400,000	$108
Unexpected expenses (price fluctuation and inflation)		370,000	370,000	$100

Total costs= : $ 2,082

2. Table of spending on the project

We were awarded a $2,000 grant from Go Make a Difference to support the project. However, since none of us had a bank account in Uganda, the funds were transferred to my UWC National Committee account in Uganda. Due to transfer charges, we received $1,950. Fortunately, the $100 we had allocated for unexpected expenses helped cover part of these costs, and we also secured discounts on several products during purchases.

Name of the item	**Quantity(Details)**	**Price per item in Uganda shillings(UGX)**	**Total amount in Uganda shillings(UGX)**	**Total in USD($)**
Site preparation materials	Land clearing, mulches, leveling and soil testing, meeting with host community leaders	492750	492750	$134
Seeds and seedlings	Varieties:Tomatoes, spinach, lettuce, cabbage, eggplant,watermelon, onions, amaranth,carrot, okra,etc	1 packet of each vegetable seed = 5,400 and we're planning to buy 30 packets for 10 different seeds (5400x30x10)	1,620,000	$444
Tools	Shovels, hoes, rakes, watering can,and small other gardening tools	Watering can-(10,000x25) Rakes-(15,000x25) Hoes-(25,000x25) Shovels-(28,000x5) Wheelbarrows-(150,000*1)	1,540,000	$422
Soil amendments (compost, fertilizers)	Organic compost basic fertilizers, pesticides	Organic compost(6bagsx50,000) Fertilizers(4bagsx100,000) Pesticides(2 bottles*30,000)	820,000	$225
Construction material (wood for bed)	Wood for garden beds, nails, measuring tapes	Wood(12x50,000) Nails(8kgx25,000) Measuring tapes(9x15,000)	935,000	$256
Training (Hiring an expert, materials, workshop supplies)	Hiring an expert, workshop training materials and refreshment for 25 people	580,000 for an expert and 520,000 for training and refreshments	1000,000	$274
Transportation costs	Transport of materials to the site	310,400	310,400	$85
Labour	Casual labor for land clearing, bed construction, planting (2 weeks)	50,000 per worker (8 workers)	400,000	$110

Total cost = $ 1,950

Lessons learned from the project

The "Building a Sustainable Camp" project has been a transformative experience for me and my team. Growing up in a refugee camp and volunteering as a Community Nutrition Volunteer, I deeply understand the challenges of food insecurity and malnutrition. This project allowed us to empower women with practical gardening skills, improving nutrition and fostering self-reliance. We learned the importance of community involvement, adaptability, and strong partnerships. The project boosted our leadership and project management skills while inspiring us to continue working towards sustainable solutions. We are really grateful to UWC Go Make a Difference for having given up the opportunity to bring our project to fruition and we believe this is the beginning of an interesting lifelong journey to pursue due to the amazing path created by Go Make a Difference.