



NEWS FROM UGANDA

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The Beauty of Nature, the Bread of Life

A traditional indigenous food plant in Africa, Amaranth long has been harvested for its nutritious grain throughout Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The Rev. Phenehance Onweng credits this amazing plant with saving his life when he was an infant and for sustaining his grandchildren's health today.



"When I eat amaranth, I feel good, relaxed and also experience a big change in the livelihood of the children we take care of in the family."
Rev. Phenehance Onweng

Before Onweng was born, his mother suffered a mental breakdown. Though she managed to give birth to a healthy baby boy, she could neither care for him nor breastfeed him. An aunt from his father's side of the family offered to care for him, but she did not have milk to feed him—no one in their community owned a cow. The village elders suggested she feed the newborn infant amaranth. He thrived.

Years later, on Onweng's wedding day, his mother, who had by then recovered from her illness, was called upon to make a speech. She ran into her house and brought out a basket full of amaranth grain. She presented it as "a gift of life" to her new daughter-in-law, Mary. "In her comments to the gathering, she hailed the importance and value of amaranth in light of her health situation during the time of birth of her baby," Onweng says. "This was a big testimony on the nutritional value of the amaranth."

Phenehance and Mary Onweng celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary this past year. Though they mourn their adult children whom they have lost to AIDS, they praise God for amaranth. They now feed it to their orphaned grandchildren, whom they are raising. "The grandchildren sing praises of the importance of the grain in their family," Onweng says.

Amaranth has not only nourished families in this region, it has also provided a new source of income. It is easy to grow and harvest, yields an abundance of grain and can provide as much as 30% more protein than rice, wheat flour, oats, or rye. The amaranth program implemented in the West Nile region has provided a much



A visit to the Amaranth demo gardens

needed, God-given, health-giving food source for the people living here.



Mary and her orphaned grandchildren singing about the beauty of amaranth.

Though some lower quality varieties of amaranth grow wild in the region, the amaranth program uses a high-yield indigenous variety and emphasizes good farming practices. "The community wonders how we once had lost the indigenous basics of life," Onweng says. "The rule is simple; preserve what God has given for the sustenance of human needs."

Demonstration gardens set up in schoolyards teach children to appreciate amaranth's value as food for the community. "The community has embraced growing of amaranth to improve their dietary needs," Onweng says. "Now as we drive by the schools within the community, we hear children chanting and shouting, 'Amaranth! Amaranth!'"

"That they may be of one mind"

In John 17:6-19, the apostle John shares that our Lord Jesus prayed, "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one."

This passage exemplifies that unity is needed to fulfill the ministry each of us was invited to accomplish. To this day, the call for unity remains relevant to all of humanity, the body of Christ included. CRWRC is at the forefront of creating unity by mending relationships, supporting leadership, and building capacity through teambuilding.

Bishop Aliphonse of Nebbi Diocese was struggling in his leadership and ministry. Five years ago, he replaced a charismatic and gifted leader who now serves as the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Uganda. Aliphonse offered a different style of leadership, a difference that gave rise to tensions within the congregation. "I have



Bishop (seated in the middle) with part of his team after a team building session in December 2008.

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been very lonely as Bishop in this ministry for the last five years,” says Aliphonse.

In December, CRWRC organized teambuilding training for the diocese secretariat staff. The training provided a wonderful opportunity for Aliphonse and his staff to come together, learn about each other’s personalities, and understand how their differences could enhance the ministry. “I have not had such opportunity to have an in depth sharing session with each of the secretariat staff,” Aliphonse says. “I am encouraged to learn what people know about me as my strengths and what I should endeavor to improve.”

Aliphonse has invited CRWRC to continue providing this type of leadership support, support that is helping him fulfill the call of his ministry and his Lord.



Aliphonse with one of his team members.

Learn it, teach it or loose it

In September 2008, the East African Ministry Team staff learned the Result Based Monitoring (RBM) approach. Following the training, they put RMB into action within their partner organizations. In October, they introduced RBM to their Church of Uganda partners. In December, they shared it with their partners. “The more we facilitated the approach; the more realistic and applicable it became,” says Joseph Mutebi, Program Consultant. “This has further enhanced our understanding of the principles acquired during the Community Leadership and Development (CLAD) program done two years ago. What a blessing this was to us who attended the CLAD and RBM trainings.”

What keeps us going?

Joseph and Robinah Mutebi celebrated their twenty-first wedding anniversary on December 5, 2008. Robinah accompanied Joseph to Nebbi diocese for the team building training. Joseph was amazed to see one of the women involved in the sessions approach Robinah for guidance and counsel on personal issues, issues that were impacting the woman’s work life as well as her home life.

“What had she sensed in our team work as a family? This has been possible because we have a personal relationship with the author of marriage,” Mutebi says. “(Without that) it would not be possible for us to live rather than just stay together.”

Mutebi had another opportunity to see how God has worked in his family when his three sons came home from school to spend time with the whole family at their home in Arua. “The joy expressed on this day was an indication of the inner sense of security our children experience and feel when father and mother are working together,” Mutebi says. “This leads us into deeper thinking on how best we can make our home and lives available for his service.”

To stay occupied, the boys worked together over the holidays to set up a small poultry shelter.

The Mutebis have learned many things together from their home life, community visits, church programs, and activities. Today, their son Joshua likes teaching in the Sunday school. Son Emmanuel, who wants to become a doctor, excels at providing hospitality to visitors. Son Paul, who is praying to be a pastor, is interested in working with his father at the office and during community visits.

Blessings

~ Joseph and Robinah Mutebi

Praises

- ✓ We praise God for the prayer warriors from partner churches and for the ministry support we receive from CRWRC that enables the church to be relevant to its calling.
- ✓ God continues to bless us with new relationships in the region through invitations to facilitate retreats for Christian organizations and speaking engagements in churches in the diocese on Madi, West Nile.
- ✓ We praise God for safety on the roads, continued security in the region, and, especially, political stability.
- ✓ We praise God for our accomplishments in the first half of the 2008 financial year.

Prayer

- ✓ Please pray that we will have more wisdom on how we can continue supporting the leadership of the church in fulfilling its mandate.
- ✓ Please ask that we receive sufficient grace and patience to understand the underlying issues affecting systems in the church.
- ✓ Please pray for our good health so that we can actively engage those involved in development work.
- ✓ Please ask that the church will continue to recover from any conflicts hindering its effectiveness.