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What Do You Have?

In 2 Kings, the author tells of a widow who confronted the prophet Elisha. She had crippling debt and had lost her husband, and creditors were about to take away her only sons. Her world was falling apart.

Elisha had no quick fix solutions for her. He challenged the woman by asking her one question, "What do you have?"

In most communities where handouts become the order of the day, especially in ones affected by war like in northern Uganda, communities tend to look outside themselves for answers to their situations. Rwot Omiya Group is one of several groups that have been working with a CRWRC partner in Northern Uganda to start doing things differently.

Rwot Omiya Group:
Rwot Omiya means "God has given me" in the Acholi language. Rwot Omiya is one of the community groups that emerged out of the food security groups CRWRC supported through its partner the Diocese of Northern

Uganda, in the Acholi region of Northern Uganda. The food security groups were provided with oxen, improved seeds for planting, and training to rebuild their household food security and income as they came out of a twenty-year war.

Rwot Omiya is made up mostly of women who come together weekly to save and lend out money to members for various small, household business activities. These small businesses are meant to complement their other food security activities and support the communities as they move from 20 years of camp life to self-reliance. The group started with 15 households in Agug parish in 2009 and has now grown to 26 households.

Alice Akum:

Alice Akum is one of the members of this group. She and her family were displaced from their home by war and have lived in internally displaced peoples camps for over 20 years. Alice and her husband have seven children.

Her household borrowed 10,000 shillings (\$5US) from the group to use in her small business and to be returned with interest within four weeks.



Alice Akum in front of her hut in Agug IDP camp

She and her children are using this money for baking pan cakes (Chapatis) and frying cassava chips. Within two days, she had more than doubled her money from 10,000 shillings to 21,000. "My aim right now is to raise money to buy scholastic material for my children who are going back to school in the next two weeks: pens, exercise books and more," she said.

Her family is now also rebuilding their rural home, which they had fled from 20 years ago and hope to move back to by the end of 2010.

Other group members have taken to various small businesses as well, and the group savings are growing.

We thank you for your support, which makes these programs possible. By asking "What do you have?" instead of "What do you need?" we are helping to give hope to a people who have suffered so much.



Rwot Omiya Microfinance group, after a meeting at Agum Primary School