

Report on Progress: Improved livelihoods and climate resilience for refugees in Northern Uganda and Power Against Poverty in Rural Sierra Leone

We are absolutely thrilled and immensely grateful for your support of these projects! Your participation in The Big Give Christmas Challenge this past December. Thanks to your generosity, we've made remarkable progress and achieved significant milestones that we are proud to share with you.

Improved livelihoods and climate resilience for refugees in Northern Uganda

Background

The project is running in Palabek Refugee Settlement, Lamwo County, Uganda, where we aim to improve the incomes and climate resilience of 7,200 people. This will be achieved by supporting 1,200 farmers (70% women, 70% refugees, 5% people with disabilities) to set up sustainable and climate-resilient vegetable farming businesses. The project is being delivered in partnership with VEDCO, a national Ugandan NGO.

Beneficiary Recruitment

In total, 1206 participants have been recruited, slightly surpassing the original target of 1200. The target vs actual breakdown of participants by demographic are as follows:

	Target	Actual
Women	70%	924 (77%)
Refugees	70%	853 (71%)
PWDs	5%	62 (5%)
Total	1200	1206

After identification and sensitisation of the 1206 participants, they were organised into 40 farmer groups based on their locality.



Meeting of village savings and loans group

Progress on Outcomes

Outcome 1: Increased incomes and productivity from sustainable vegetable production: We've trained 1,122 farmers in business and entrepreneurship, covering essential skills like crop selection, business planning, and

marketing. As a result, farmers have linked to regional markets, securing better prices for crops like sunflower and maize.

40 farmer groups were trained on how to set up and manage savings and lending groups (VSLA). They learned to save money, keep records, and manage their finances. We also provided tools like saving boxes and notebooks. In just six months, 32 groups saved over £21,300 and loaned out £12,300 to members, helping them invest in their farms without needing bank loans.

Outcome 2: Improved Natural Resource Protection: 40 beneficiaries have been trained in making fuel-efficient stoves, reducing the need for firewood and protecting local forests. Additionally, 40 advocacy champions are actively promoting environmental conservation, creating awareness of existing by-laws, and developing community-level action plans to prevent further degradation.

Outcome 3: Greater confidence and self-reliance of refugee and host community households: We've trained 850 beneficiaries in gender awareness, life skills, and nutrition, focusing on reducing income inequalities and promoting healthy diets. This training empowers individuals to address challenges, manage conflicts, and make informed decisions for their households.

Power Against Poverty in Rural Sierra Leone

Background

Sierra Leone remains one of the poorest countries in the world and people living in rural villages face the most extreme forms of poverty and injustice – **60% of people in rural areas live in poverty** (World Bank 2020). Despite this, their needs are often neglected by decision-makers with a lack of access to basic services, such as clean water, health and education, a major challenge to rural communities. Elections meaning that project activities had to be done in small groups due to security issues, and the cost of living crisis continues with some statistics on inflation indicating 42% for 2023, making the need for the project even more critical.

Poverty is closely linked to the lack of opportunity, widening inequalities and the gap between those with power and those without. Violence and discrimination against women, young people and people with disabilities is common, leaving these groups more vulnerable to poverty and with little confidence to change their situation. They are also rarely represented in leadership positions, lack a voice to influence change and are excluded from the decisions affecting

Progress on Outcomes and Activities

Outcome 1 Final Target: 30 local organisations strengthened to meet the members' needs and improve household income for 22,800 people

The project has established 20 new community organisations (CBOs), supporting members to elect women, young people and people with disabilities as CBO leaders through a fair and transparent process. It has also strengthened and linked 10 larger CSOs to specifically represent different groups - women, youths and people with disabilities.

We have begun supporting 20 community organisations to develop and provide economic development services for their members by:

- Establishing a revolving loan scheme in each of the 20 CBOs to support people to set up new small businesses or expand existing businesses; 1229 people have received these loans, repayments are at 100%. Growing revolving loan funds with the skills to manage and sustain this resource once the project ends will support the CBOs' sustainability.
- All 20 CBOs have established a seed bank providing rice and groundnut seed loans and reached 843 people; these loans are also reaching people not yet confident or able to take out a cash loan.

- 400 young people have started their apprenticeships in a range of skills – from breadmaking, soap making to hairdressing with local artisans providing on-the-job training;
- Literacy and numeracy training have begun with 950 illiterate adults, supporting practical small business management skills. Management committees for the literacy circles have been established to improve the sustainability of these groups- building on learning from another project.

Outcome 2: Improved access to rights and decision-making for women, young people, people with disabilities

- We have begun the training 30 organisations, local leaders and community members in human rights with a focus on gender equality, women’s rights and disability rights; 3947 people have been reached.
- 65 decision-makers in chiefdoms, ward and district-level organisations have been trained on accountable leadership; on laws and policies related to the rights of marginalised groups, and practical ways to change discriminatory practices.
- We have trained 243 CBO members in advocacy and negotiation skills and 85 in local governance and accountability

Outcome 3: Strong coalitions of local organisations built to influence decision-making

- The project team has begun to strengthen links between communities, CBOs and decision-makers to discuss community needs and challenges – increasing the conversations and engagement taking place. Members of the organisations are beginning to share information and collaborate through whatsapp groups and other means
- The project has facilitated 6 forums between CSOs and Chiefdom/Ward Development Committees
- 8 awareness/media campaigns have been carried out to amplify the voices of local organisations on key issues



Madam Massa Komeh, 35years old, who was amputated during the 1991 Rebel war in Sierra Leone, says....It has been very difficult for me to embark on farming though the only source for women to get money in Kpetema community. As a member of Gbotima Agricultural Development Association I benefited from the seed loan and other agricultural tools for the first time on my own.... I also loan (borrow) money from the revolving loan scheme to pay for labour in the farm. As I am speaking, I am now a proud farmer and have paid back the seed loan to the group and still have more seeds for planting and for home consumption.... I am also happy to be one of the learners in the Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) circle. Before this time I cannot read and write, but can now read and write the names of my

Impact by the end of the first year:

- ✓ 30 community organisations have provided services to 2179 **households** to start improving their incomes and agricultural productivity (64% women, 51% young people, 11% people with disabilities), benefitting 12,420 people in their households.
- ✓ 3947 people and 160 local leaders have been reached with understanding of human rights, including gender and disability rights
- ✓ The project team is beginning to observe examples of improved leadership or decisions inclusive of women, youth and people with disabilities, who are now part of their leadership.

Your contribution truly makes a difference, and we couldn't have done it without you. Thank you for being such a vital part of our journey!