

**Project Summary Report: Potable Water in Uganda
Mbarara, Uganda - Summer 2007**

Submitted by: Minh Quang Vo, non-UWC, American born, University of Florida

The project was implemented in the Rwenshaku parish of the Bubaare sub-county, located in the district of Mbarara in southwest Uganda. The project began 16 May 2007 and it is ongoing. While the project's success was impossible without the combined efforts of the Local Councils from the villages, parish, and sub-county involved as well as the project beneficiaries that make up the Rwenshaku parish, the project leaders are Duncan Crispin Sessazi, Ugandan government researcher and lecturer of pharmacology at the Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST), and me.

Funded by the K.W. Davis 100 Projects for Peace grant, World Crew Uganda, Duncan, and me, the project has realized the majority of the goals outlined for it during its developmental stages. Said goals are as follows:

- i. To create a sustainable, asset based project, i.e., a project made sustainable through the use of as many domestic resources as possible
- ii. To construct two water treatment/storage structures at communal water sources,
- iii. To plant and cultivate a Moringa Oleifera (MO) grove within the target community,
- iv. To educate target community on how to use MO seeds in water clarification,
- v. To promote the use of MO's nutritional byproducts in traditional cooking in an effort to lower health/nutritional disparities within the region, and
- vi. To find a market in which the tree's byproducts can be sold to generate a supplemental source of income.

Many efforts were made to ensure the sustainability of the project, with the most paramount being that the project remained as asset based as possible (goal i.). An indicative example would be the decision to have Duncan facilitate the workshops. During the project's infancy, we weren't sure as to how the workshops should be facilitated; I could either facilitate them all myself; both Duncan and I could have facilitated them together; or all of it could have been left to Duncan. In the end, we decided that it would be best if Duncan facilitated the workshops (goals iv. and v.). This decision was made for multiple reasons. Our belief was that Duncan, as a distinguished Ugandan professor, should facilitate the workshops so that community members would internalize the material covered, rather than question the facilitator's and project's motive. And while English is the common language of the many peoples of Uganda, most, particularly inhabitants of more rural areas and older age groups, prefer to speak and learn in their local language. Because Duncan has worked extensively throughout the district, he has a firm command over the local language in Mbarara, making it easier for participants to understand and internalize the material. Additionally, his continued presence in the community will serve as a symbol of commitment to the project, thus encouraging community members to continue to move forward with it.

In regards to the water treatment/storage structure, two were initially planned for construction. However, the actual cost was higher than the estimates and only one was constructed (goal ii.). The structure has been completed, but its design and pump are not as efficient as anticipated. The pump and structures are currently undergoing modifications under the direction of Duncan. Additionally, the community has taken the initiative to form a committee whose role is to oversee the treatment of the water from the local watering hole using the structure and mete said water appropriately among community members (goal i.).

While the development and cultivation of a collective MO grove was initially proposed for the project, the idea was discarded in an effort to create a more sustainable project (goal iii), with the premise being that after the development of the grove, intra-community disputes may arise in regards to the amount of work one family puts into the cultivation of the grove compared to another. This in turn may result in the neglect of the grove and dissent within the community. To circumvent this problem, it was decided that each homestead would be responsible for planting and caring for a certain number of MO trees. This should also contribute to the sustainability of the project.

Within Uganda and its neighboring countries, Moringa products are very popular. Among the various products that can be made from the tree, there exists a face cream that can be developed from MO seeds, a powder made from the leaves that is traditionally mixed into tea and is commonly used to boost immunity, and an industrial lubricant. In about six months, the trees planted within the community should be producing sufficient numbers of seeds for product development, so workshops have been scheduled to educate the community on how to develop the aforementioned products (goal vi). While the products will initially be sold throughout Uganda, we are hoping to market the products within the United States, with all profits going back to the community.

Water is one of the most abundant resources in the world and yet there are people in every continent suffering from inaccessibility to clean water. There can never be peace in a world where even the most basic of necessities are not within the reach of the masses. The use of MO to clarify water, while it isn't 100% efficient, greatly reduces the risk of infection by waterborne diseases. In addition to the provision of clean water, use of the tree's extremely nutritious byproducts also has the capacity to augment one's health. These features, which can be used to develop a new source of income, can effectively increase the quality of life for many people in rural communities throughout the world. Due to the nature of our work, we have already received multiple requests to repeat this project in other communities and districts throughout the region and country. We have been advised by the African Institute for Capacity Development to form a non-governmental organization (NGO), in an effort to receive future funding from private foundations as well as different governmental branches. Consequently, the working group is currently in the process of applying for NGO status in Uganda. For the time being, Duncan is directly supervising the project's progress, while I peripherally supervise it from the United States, putting together all the necessary paperwork for NGO status as well as seeking out further funding.

At the 9th Ordinary Session of The African Union Summit, Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni referred to Africa as the cradle of civilization and mankind, and it was during my short (and surely not the last time) time there, that I lived and experienced a lifetime. Of the many and multidimensional things that I learned in the seat of mankind's beginning, one direct lesson that I will take away with me from this project is that sometimes, in order for something to succeed, one must step back and put one's ego aside as I have done with the workshops by having Duncan facilitate them rather than myself. And as I plan on pursuing a career in public health, I believe that this lesson will have to stay in the forefront of my mind if I am to be an effective leader in that discipline or any discipline at all.



Representatives of each participating household begin assembling outside of Bubaare sub-county headquarters in anticipation of a workshop.



Two high school-aged boys are seen collecting untreated water for drinking and domestic purposes.



Water treatment/storage structure constructed beside local water source.