

CONCEPT NOTE: OPIT-KIC WIDOW'S GROUP COMMUNITY PROJECT IN SIRIBA, KIRYANDONGO

1.0 Introduction and Background

During the 20 years of conflict in Northern Uganda between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda, under the leadership of Joseph Kony, LRA targeted villages to mainly abduct and force children and youth to join rebels. This led to massive internal displacement: An estimated 1.8 million people the majority being women/widows and children/orphans whose spouses and parents respectively had either been killed or were abducted, moved to camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Kiryandongo, then a relatively secure district bordering Northern Uganda, is one of those districts that received a large influx of IDPs.

2.0 Problem Statement and Motivation for Intervention

The settlement of the IDPs in Kiryandongo created a set of complex challenges, not only amongst IDPs themselves but also to the rest of the community regarding resettlement and reintegration. One of the biggest challenges was and remains *inability to access and own land as an economic resource*. The circumstances were extremely difficult especially for women/widows who needed to provide for their families away from the IDP camps that they themselves were a severe challenge for this group. Over time, those that owned land in the areas gradually realized the value of land and started renting it out to those that were homeless for the construction of temporary shelters and cultivation of food. On average, one acre of land is rented at 100,000 UGX (\$27) per year, which the majority of the women cannot afford.

Today, one of the direct and compounding consequences of this kind of marginalization is failure to send children to school. Although Uganda has implemented a policy on free education for primary and secondary school levels, women/widows in Kiryandongo still face major challenges: much as the education is regarded '*free*', for a children to be able to go to school, every parent must be in position to provide most of the scholastic materials such as uniforms, books, pens and pencils – which this group cannot afford.

As a means to provide a durable solution to this problem, a group of widows decided to come together and formed a saving group, the OPIT-KIC Widows Group which is loosely translated to mean, '*Let us feed the orphans.*' The core objective of the OPIT-KIC is to bring widows together, support each other, save money, invest and generate income to meet some of the need such as being able to afford to rent land for cultivation, buy scholastic materials for children and provide shelter, food and clothing for their families. OPIT-KIC consists of 130 members (mainly widows) and within the group; there are 4 different saving groups. The groups save and manage finances separately but are joined by a common cause of feeding orphans and improving household incomes and the community.

It is a combination of both the challenges and this community effort to self-help that has motivated the Rotary Club of Kampala North (RCKN) to plan supportive interventions. RCKN proposes to pitch its community empowerment and service interventions through the OPTI-KIC Widow's Group over a period of at least 4 years.

3.0 Community assessment

According to the 2014 National Housing Population census, Kiryandongo district stands at a total population of 268,188 with a geographical area of 3,624.1km². It consists of 4 Sub-counties, 30 parishes and 22 villages. The OPTI-KIC Widow's Group is stationed in Siriba village located on the main Gulu high way in Kiryandongo district, North-Western Uganda. It is 225 kilometers from

Kampala and takes approximately 3 and half hours drive by road. The Southern Ward Parish which consists of two villages, Nyakadot and Siriba has a total population of 7,658 of which 3,722 are Males and 3,936 Females.

While conducting the community assessment (enclosed), a wide range of resources that would help the implementation of the project were identified. These include: Land for agriculture (this has to be hired), community labour by both women and men including the youth; electricity (Hydro Electric Power); free space to construct storage facilities within reasonable distance; semi-skilled labour and health workers e.g nurses and clinical officers who are mostly children of the OPIT-KIC members.

The key challenges were identified as: *Lack of capital to boost the revolving fund; Lack of funding for income generating activities particularly agriculture; Low yields from agriculture; Limited healthcare services; Limited water sources and no safe drinking water; Low soil fertility; Lack of financial management and record keeping skills; Lack of technical training for youth; Poor access to land ownership; and poor access to education particularly for orphaned children and youth..*

4.0 Interventions agreed with the community:

4.1 Agriculture.

- i.** Provide training on improved agricultural methods as well as implements like ox-ploughs; and awareness of and access to markets
- ii.** Strengthen loan facilities through training and capitalization (skills, equipment, and capital).
- iii.** Secure communal land for the OPTI-KIC that shall be used for agricultural projects.
- iv.** Build capacity in crop value addition through training and construction a communally owned grinding mill and storage facilities (actual construction funded outside the grant)

4.2 Healthcare.

- i.** Training in health-seeking behaviour along with supportive establishment of primary healthcare facilities
- ii.** Guide the development and training of Village Health Teams (VHTs).
- iii.** Support inputs activities and inputs for disease prevention and treatment.

4.3 Water and sanitation.

Implement a comprehensive Water, Sanitation, and Health (WASH) for the community (training, potable water sources; pit-latrines; sanitary habits; village water and sanitation committees).

4.4 Education

Work with the two selected primary schools to mount programmes that will lead to improved quality of education (based on learning outcomes); health; higher school attendance; and improved academic performance.

5.0 Preliminary Budget

The preliminary budget, subject to further discussion with Rotary partners and the community, is USD \$90,000. (Kampala North would contribute \$5,000 to the project, and D9211 DDF \$8,000).