

Youth Reset! A conference that steered the lives of youth in Imvepi, Rhino Camp and Palorinya Refugee Settlements and

Research reports are awash with claims that the youth are the biggest perpetrators of violence in all the refugee settlements and host communities in Uganda. However, besides causing violence as alleged, Community Empowerment for Peace and Development West Nile provided the opportunity for the youth to prove to their communities that they could be known for doing good works in the community with the hope of causing mindset change among the youth in the community and other community members.

Unexpectedly, the young women and men during this conference unanimously agreed that they were the major share holders in the business of causing violence in their communities but they justified that some of the youth were faced with a number of frustrating conditions in which they found themselves and violence was one of the few options they were left with to vent their anger on the cruel world that mistreated them.



The Youth in Palorinya Refugee Settlement actively take part in community service to clean the Borehole at Block 7 Base Camp Zone

Apart from making the youth realize that they could be very useful in the community by offering community service to address community challenges that were within their reach, the “Youth Reset” conference covered other topics like the role of youth in conflicts/violence, how the youth can create the peaceful environment in which they want to live, youth in development, youth and Gender Based Violence, drug and alcohol abuse and how to overcome drug and alcohol addictions including addictions to betting, financial literacy, youth in leadership and livelihoods among others.

As part of community service, the youth were guided to identify community service points like water, schools, health facilities or households that needed the support of the youth to improve their cleanliness or living conditions and offer their services to contribute to creating peace in their respective communities or in the lives of the community members they reach out to.

“These youth have made me feel so proud of them today. I did not believe that they could manage this hard work when they asked me to grant them the permission to clean this water point yesterday but they have achieved beyond my expectations. If possible, I would like to request them to help us to clean our community centre where we hold our meetings too. It is too bushy and not fit to hold meetings of late. In fact a snake chased us from there once”, **said Mr. William Longa, the Leader of Block 7 in Base Camp Zone Palorinya Settlement**

In Imvepi Refugee Settlement, the youth offered their service to cleaning two bushy community service points that included the Haleluiya Church premises and a community borehole (water point) that the community was not caring to tidy up.

In Palorinya Refugee Settlement, the participants carried out some consultations and found out the the community water point at block 7 in Base Camp Zone had become a health hazard for the refugee communities because the manhole that was created to accommodate the spilled water was blocked for over 8 months forcing the water to flow out and had created a pool in the nearby bushes which for a long time had become a breeding ground for the mosquitoes in the area.

Youth Reset Team poses for a photo after cleaning the Community Centre in Palorinya Refugee Settlement



The Refugee Welfare Council Chairman had intervened and tried to hire someone to open the manhole in April 2022 but the person failed to do a good job and claimed he could not get the right tools within the settlement.

During the community service, the youth did not only manage to successfully open the manhole to allow the spilled water to enter but also cleaned the premises by digging out and slashing the bushes, washing the water reception area and sweeping all the accumulated rubbish to ensure that the community had access to uncontaminated water.



The Youth Reset Team in Rhino Camp Settlement Excitedly Flag their Certificates in the air after completing the 3-Day Youth Conference

In Rhino Camp refugee settlement, the Youth Reset Team identified the home of 3 elderly people to offer their community service. In this family they found that the household members lacked all the basic necessities of life but the biggest challenges they faced ranged from lack of water, firewood, food and clothing. Since the participants were not aware they would be presented with these challenges in this family, they did what they could to try to solve the immediate challenges like hunger by going back to their homes to bring any food they could get in their houses and in total they collected 4 Kgs of maize meal, 7 cups of beans, 2 bunches of bananas, 3 Kgs of maize, 1 Kg of ground nuts, 3 Kgs of sugar, 4 bars of soap and 1 Kg of salt.

“This has been the most fulfilling day of my entire life. I never thought I would feel this good after helping someone. So I have decided to do this more often”, **confessed Jessica Blessing.**



Mr. Yasin raises his hands to ask for God's Blessings upon the Youth Reset Team as the RMA looks on

To address the problem of lack of water, the team collected money (Ugx.20,000) to pay the water bill which made the Government of Uganda to disconnect the water tap that was connected to serve this vulnerable family by Water Mission in 2018.

The total bill for which the water was disconnected was Ugx.38,000, James paid off Ugx.20,000 and pleaded for more time to pay the balance of Ugx.18,000 but the Officer from Umbrella (a government entity) would not relent and still went ahead to disconnect the water tap in July 2022 which has forced the family to either buy water or stay without it for the last 5 months.

“Thinking of the effects of the war which made us to lose all our properties back in South Sudan, I have always thought that we were suffering and more vulnerable than the host community members. But after seeing the condition in which Yasin and his family are living, I feel some of the host communities here in Uganda may need more support from the partners like World Food Programme (WFP) and United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) than us the refugees”, **said Tomoro Joseph**

Additionally, the youth fetched for the family 10 Jerrycans of water, split logs to avail enough firewood to last the elderly people for over a month, washed their dishes, cooked food for the family, cleaned the environment by slashing and digging to clear the bushes and swept the compound to ensure the family members felt more safe in their home and most importantly they stayed, joked with, cared and showed love for the family that was feeling isolated from the community they lived in.