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## GRADUATING TO **RESILIENCE**

### JOINT PARTNER MONITORING VISIT REPORT



March 2021  
Kamwenge District, Uganda.

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Graduating to Resilience is implemented by AVSI Foundation in partnership with



# **ABOUT**

Graduating to Resilience is a USAID-funded Activity led by AVSI Foundation in partnership with IMPAQ International and Trickle Up. The seven-year program operational in Kamwenge District seeks to test the Graduation Approach to graduate 13,200 economically active but ultra-poor refugee and host community households unable to meet their basic needs consistently without some form of assistance. The program will engage the households in two 30-month cohorts.

## **BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

The joint partner monitoring visit followed an idea to have the AVSI Foundation collaborators and partners in Kamwenge District and Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement meet, interact and share experiences from participants of the USAID Graduating to Resilience Activity.

The joint visit also aimed to provide highlights to the stakeholders about the program approach which builds the livelihoods and resilience of refugees and host community households in the district. This included showcasing group and individual coaching techniques used, the Village Saving and Loans Associations model, the Woman Plus approach, business coaching, referrals to critical services, nutrition education, linkages, trainings in agronomy.

The household and group visits took place on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2021 in Nkoma, Bwizi, Biguli and Bihanga sub counties, and Nkoma, Ntenungi and Kaihora zones in the refugee settlement. Fifteen sites were visited and thereafter a feedback and recommendations session held.

## ORIENTATION SESSION

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The one-hour session briefed partners about the USAID-funded Graduating to Resilience Activity, its unique approach and the sections in the program design, providing highlights of other AVSI Foundation programs implemented in the Kamwenge District and within Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement. Partners were also presented with site briefers indicating what they should expect during the field visits.



### RITA LAROK

CHIEF OF PARTY - GRADUATING TO RESILIENCE ACTIVITY

The Activity is a research-oriented program testing three different models. The standard adapted, group coaching and empowerment models with the aim to find out the most cost-effective approach.

"As you interact with the participants today, you will realize that some receive different assistance from the others."

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# THE SITE VISITS

The team was divided into four groups, with each group visiting the refugee and host community areas of intervention: a group of participants in their Village Saving and Loans Association during a savings or coaching session.

All teams met Activity participants at household level as they responded to questions from the partners and shared their journey through the activities provided to them in the program and about their progress.





## FEEDBACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### GODFREY MUCUNGUZI

RESIDENT DISTRICT OFFICER - KAMWENGE DISTRICT



Today, I witnessed firsthand how these interventions have transformed the lives of people in this area. I thought the Activity supported women alone and I was concerned that they would become bigheaded in their families but I have witnessed the collaboration in the households and I am happy about the results. I am convinced by this 50/50 approach which is giving both refugee and the host community a chance to develop. Thanks to AVSI and USAID for such commendable work.



### GERALD BAALE

DISTRICT PROBATION OFFICER - KAMWENGE DISTRICT

The passion fruit group in Bwizi sub-county embraced the VSLA opportunity and they acquired money which they reinvested in their homes. I was interested to know the involvement of men and they said they work together with their wives.

### IVAN RUHINDA

PROTECTION OFFICER - OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER



Cases of spouses working together for the growth of their families is gradually becoming a normal occurrence in this place. Our visit to the program participants is a means of accountability to the local people, and today's visit is a report of AVSI's involvement in development.



### HILLARY AGWE

LIVELIHOODS OFFICER - UNHCR, RWAMWANJA REFUGEE SETTLEMENT

The joint decision making that we observed in these households showed that there might be a sustainable relationship in these homes to help them build livelihoods even when this assistance is no more.

## FRED KWIZERA

CHAIRPERSON - BIHANGA SUBCOUNTY, KAMWENGE DISTRICT



We met a woman living peacefully with her husband. Before the Activity came to this place, this couple had frequent disagreements but since they were supported with a sewing machine, they have added a new business - a grain milling machine and they are doing well - I am thankful to their coach. Women here also used to get loans at a 50 percent interest, but their new savings groups are lending them money at 10 percent.



## JOSHUA OKOLING

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT OFFICER - NSAMIZI TRAINING INSTITUTE

AVSI programs promote the use of organic pesticides and renewable energy which helps keep the environment safe. I observed a total mindset change.

## TIMOTHY KITAKA

COMMANDANT - RWAMWANJA REFUGEE SETTLEMENT



We noticed that irrespective of whether households receive equal support, their progress will vary - an indication that other factors such as a hospitable environment are a key determinant in transforming the livelihoods of vulnerable people.



## JIMMY ODEKE

MAYOR - BIGULI TOWN COUNCIL, KAMWENGE DISTRICT

Hand washing facilities are being utilized in homes. Farming has also increased and they (refugee and host community) are harvesting more amounts of food from their gardens than before. These are signs of people's lives becoming better.

## IVAN ECHAAT

OFFICER - LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION



When you meet beneficiaries with knowledge about the assistance they are receiving and how it's helping them - this evidence of good visibility to the funder and their appreciation for the assistance.



## DENIS TINDIMWEBWA

VETERINARY OFFICER - NKOMA SUBCOUNTY, KAMWENGE DISTRICT



The high yielding banana plantations we saw show good agronomic practices that the farmers have adopted. I also noticed that the people set priorities for their enterprises, and their graduation maps show good nutrition trends which will give their children good growth.



## ABEL KABUYE

CHAIRPERSON - NKOMA SUBCOUNTY, KAMWENGE DISTRICT

In Bihanga village, an older-aged man living with a physical disability had a tidy homestead. He said he received this knowledge from his coach and that keeping his home clean reduces his chances of getting diseases.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Participants are aware of existing government programs, however further means to link people to government programs should be found.
- Tangible assets such as goats, chicken exist in individual households. Groups should also be encouraged to own such assets.
- The electricity power grid should be extended to further areas of the settlement to facilitate participant's businesses.
- Some households have plans bigger than the existing markets. The Activity should establish models on how to create access to larger markets.
- The Activity should use original attestation cards of refugees when identifying and enrolling the next beneficiaries.
- The Activity should facilitate participants to promote value addition.
- Need to have frequent coordination meetings with partners for a better understanding of activities, for referrals and linkages between partners. The discussions from the meetings should be widely shared for learning and adaptation.



These recommendations will be used to improve our services to the participants, and we look forward to your participation in the graduation events.

**INNOCENT CWINYAI**  
Graduation and Linkages Advisor,  
Graduating to Resilience Activity.



The Refugee Desk is appreciative to AVSI, partners and USAID for the interventions in refugee operations. Indeed people's lives are improving.

**IVAN RUHINDA**  
Protection Officer,  
Office of the Prime Minister.



We learn from our challenges to build on our strength so that we can continue to provide the best service to participants.

**RITA LAROK**  
Chief of Party,  
Graduating to Resilience Activity.

The event was closed with a review of the day's activities. Donor visibility was evident through the stories told by the USAID Graduating to Resilience Activity participants. The households exhibited steady progress on their path to graduation and resilience. AVSI staff efforts, donor funding and partner involvement in the Activity implementation was appreciated at the joint partner monitoring visit.





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