



Ugunja
Community Resource Centre

The Newsletter for Partners and Friends



www.ugunja.org

Development
NEWSLETTER

Nov.—Dec., 2010
Edition

Local Action Is Beautiful

Volume 4 Issue 6

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Order in "Abila"- Parliament



Left:: Nyadorera CLRC youths present a skit. Right:: Mr. Masiga, the CLRC's youth officer.

Monthly Online Newsletter
for Partners and Friends

Vision & Mission

A community that is
Sustainable, Equitable
and Empowered

Promoting Networking,
knowledge exchange and
service provision for
sustainable development

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**Month's Quotable
Quote**

**All are born great
to achieve great-
ness and have
greatness thrust !**

An affiliate of UCRC, Nyadorera Community Learning and Resource Centre (NCLRC) in Alego-Usonga Constituency of the extended Siaya County is a community based initiative established on the brink of championing community's information sharing needs.

The centre has various programmes but the cultural project commonly known as *Abila* is being hailed for its role in bridging the information gap to the community. According to the Luo and its dictates, *Abila* is a place where the old and young alike, meet so that the latter can learn more on the Luo tradition and learn how to fit in the larger community.

It provides a proper platform for learning exploits but with the onset of Christianity and civilization, most of them are on their death beds but at Nyadorera, it still stands strong. "We incorporated the *Abila* issue into our system to enhance exchange of information on culture; this is a place where the old and youths meet to draw

comparison between the past and the current lifestyles," says Mr. William Masiga, the CLRC's youth officer.

"This enables youths to learn and take best practices from our culture and discard cultures that are demeaning and oppressive," he added. The UCRC media team was in attendance of an *Abila* session on October 29, 2010 that revolved around ritual sex from a traditional angle – the questions why and when it was done were clearly answered.

Twice a month

The *Abila* department organizes its sessions twice per month. They meet at the beginning and at the end of every month for deliberations on various topics. In the room, women take seats on the left hand while men take seats on the opposite side.

The presumed 'speaker' or "*Jakom Abila*" takes a seat in the middle of the room and he is the indisputable coordinator in the

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International Bridge on Brink of Collapse



"Mining along this bridge is against the law. You should invest in other economic ventures so that by the time the government serves a notice of evacuation, you shall have something to hold unto," he said.

Mr. Omondi was speaking at the shores of the river on November 19, 2010 in a meeting between UCRC and the Ulumba community. The get together aimed at sensitizing locals on the need to undertake other economic platforms like agriculture to cut down on quarry activities that are a threat to the bridge's stability.

The bridge is on the Kisumu – Busia highway just a few kilometres from Ugunja town. The bridge connects Kenya to East and Central Africa and beyond through Busia. It is an important infrastructure; transport can be paralyzed if its existence is cut short with intensive mining underneath.

The meeting came on the back of a taskforce formed in October this year to spearhead rehabilitation of the mines along the bridge. The five man taskforce is tasked with enhancing diversification in terms of economic activities so as to ease pressure on the bridge.

UCRC Director Mr Aggrey Omondi has urged Ulumba Bridge ballast excavators and sand harvesters along the River Nzoia in Ugenya- Ugunja Districts, Ugenya Constituency to invest in other economic viable activities for economic sustainability.

Mining along this bridge is against the law. You should invest in other economic ventures so that by the time the government serves a notice of evacuation, you shall have something to hold unto



Top left : An arrow showing the bridge's pillar and a circle depicting the area of excavation next to the pillar. Below left:: the Ulumba bridge and right; some of ballast excavators and sand harvesters.

It is chaired by Madam Ann Owino, the Siaya District Environmental Officer. Other members are: Mrs. Caroline Onchoka, D.C, Ugenya district, Mrs Faith Kandagor, D.O, Ugunja division, Ms Rose Ong'ech, head of UCRC's Advocacy & Networking programme and Mr Lawrence Otieno, chairman of the Ulumba Quarry Welfare Association.

According to Mr Otieno, approximately 18,000 people in Ulumba solely depend on the bridge for livelihoods, most of whom are widows, widowers and orphans. Men quarry and crush stones into ballast while women carry them to safer havens for easy transportation whenever the clients come calling.

The bridge is less than ten metres high; quarry operatives go on with their chores unperturbed. The bridge rumbles as vehicles and trucks speed past it; a sign that it is perpetually and gradually losing its stability after many years of quarrying.

During the meeting, Mr. Gabriel Ofuwa- UCRC's agricultural officer, listed farming activities that Ulumba dwellers can try their hands in. He cited the grain legumes project that advocates for growing of cow peas soya beans and groundnuts, chicken rearing and passion fruit farming as lucrative farming engagements that can substitute quarrying.

Mrs. Victorine Olwanda, Siaya Seed Sacco (SSS) manger also attended the meeting and enlightened the residents on the need of saving a fraction of their little hard earned cash.

It is a "Mass" Birthday

Approximately sixty children that participate in the UCRC's Saturday programme had a joint birthday party on November 27, 2010 at the Centre's offices. The Saturday programme brings kids around Ugunja together for educational programmes.



They take part in fun games, singing, reading, spiritual nourishment and watching educational programmes on Television. The combined birthday served as a challenge to parents to start embracing their children's birthdays.

"Most parents have become busy to the extent that they do not recognize and celebrate their sons and daughters birthdays," said Enoch Chiteri, event organizer and UCRC's Youth Officer.

The event was preceded by kids being painted with blue, red and yellow powder colours. The paints depicted ones name and age. The eldest had 12 years while the youngest was a year old.

Out of the sixty plus children, only two stood out; this day was their actual birthday. Clement Opiyo and Bernard Odongo are twins born on November 27, 2003. And during this happy moment, the mum capped their happy moment with glittering birthday cards.

The organizers made sure that kids enjoyed the day to the fullest.



They competed in face painting, sweet search, tag of war, water race, singing and exploration. Although the birthday cakes were missing, they broke 'birthday biscuits' before gulping them with juice.

Ultimately, birthday cards were in store for them; a move that made most of them to leave a happy lot.

YPW 2010 lives to it's billing

The 2010 Youth Peace Week (YPW) has been marked in style. Organized by UCRC's Youth Project, the event's curtains came up on Tuesday November 30, and down on Thursday December 02, 2010 amid droves of youths from within and without that graced the occasion.

Themed, "Youth and Transformational Leadership," the three day event was marked at three different venues: Nyadorera Community Resource Centre in Alego-Usonga constituency and Mariwa Community Resource Centre and Nyasanda Community High School both in Ugenya constituency.

Day one was whiled away at Nyadorera where UCRC's Rose Ong'ech, Francis Pesa Siwolo and Paul Odumbe of *Chemi Chemi ya Ukweli* took starring roles in moderating discussions on conflict management, demonstration of the community's approach to promotion of peace and active non violence.

The event's day two was celebrated at Mariwa and it came at a time when the globe was marking the World Aids Day. As a result, the day's programme carried HIV/AIDS themes: HIV/AIDS concept, Relevance of World Aids Day to youths and health talk – Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC).

This was facilitated by Mr. Duncan Wambo, a community mobilizer with the Nyanza Reproductive Health Service (NRHS).

On the final day at Nyasanda, the programme circled around reflections and presentations. Presentations entailed

performance of informative and educational skits and poems.

The Youths also engaged in tree planting as a way of urging and encouraging community members to plant trees in plenty as a sure way of tackling the adverse climatic conditions afflicting the region and the world at large.

The Youth Peace Week (YPW) in Kenya is a week-long annual event that gives youths a highway to



Participants participate in a tree planting session at Nyadorera.

positively explore on issues around social justice and governance, and to strategize on how to promote peace and co-existence in the communities' they inhabit.

The event was first held in December, 1998. UCRC in collaboration with other local, national, international organizations and government agencies has been at the forefront of coordinating and outlining programmes for the youth centered along

addressing issues that drive them towards antagonism and intolerance during YPW.

Continued from page 1

Order in “Abila”- Parliament

‘house’ or “Duol”. The debates have to start and end with the speaker; he is the eye and ear of the house, everybody only speaks with his permission.

As discussions rage on, hands fly high in bid to attract the speaker’s attention, heads are nodded in the affirmative and voices chorus in unison. Calls of ‘it’s true’, ‘additionally’ and ‘I want to differ’ are the goodies in trade.

Debates go on and on until everyone is satisfied that the day’s topic has been exhausted. People leaving the hall can be heard murmuring all in praise of Abila – the only forum where one is kept abreast with the culture. Members of Abila have just one wish, finding themselves in a local or community radio station discussing these matters with the larger audience. We just hope UCRC will soon realize its vision of owning a community radio station.

The centre started off as an adult education centre in 2002 before graduating to a CLRC in 2005. The core objectives are developing a reading culture and acting as a link to access of information by community members.

Apart from Abila, the CLRC runs library, agriculture, paralegal and people living with disability projects.

EDITORIAL

Good people, the year is coming to an end; excellence to the good old God for having guided all of us since the year began to this instance.

The year is ending amid cheers and fanfare round the African continent. The continent hosted a historic and successful World Cup tournament in June-July. After 64 matches played on eight stadiums down in South Africa, Spain – the pass masters deservedly lifted the greatest soccer prize – the FIFA World Cup Trophy.

To the Kenyan people, this is a special year coming to an end. After more than two decades ‘looking’ for a new constitutional dispensation, the bumpy and sharp cornered road finally came to an end in August, when Kenyans overwhelmingly voted in favour of the new constitution that was later promulgated by His Excellency, the President Emilio Stanley Mwai Kibaki and all is set for its implementation.

The month of August is without doubt a dark horse in the history of this Nation. To many a Kenyan, it is a month accompanied by a lot of tribulations. The fact that the new constitution was voted for and promulgated in August underlines God’s great plans for this country.

Back to our roots at UCRC, a lot has been said and an equal measure of work has been done since the year began. The Grain Legumes Project (GLP) that promotes growth of legume crops (Soya beans, Cowpeas and Groundnuts) in Busia, Teso and Siaya Districts picked up early this year, and so far, so good as many successes have been achieved.

In the project, UCRC is partnering with Appropriate Rural Development Agriculture Programs (ARDAP) in Busia and Rural Energy and Food Security Organization (REFSO) in Teso to promote the production of legume crops for food security, income generation and soil fertility replenishment. The project’s first year has come to an end, two more years to go.

The Advocacy & Networking (ADNET) programme has by far been the greatest beneficiary this year. What with Mr. David Onyango, a lawyer and Mrs Millicent Guya, an environmentalist being attached in the programme to first track women land rights and ownership issues? Siaya Seed Sacco so far has done wonders on the ground as clients, youths in particular have benefited a great deal through the Sacco’s programmes. Bad news is always good news to a journalist, but this time, we were speaking good news; developmental news. Our Desk therefore has the pleasure to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a prosperous happy new year.

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MOTTO:

Local Action is Beautiful



The Ugunja Community Resource Centre through facilitation by Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has participated in the 6th Pan – Commonwealth Forum (PCF) on Open learning. The forum took place from 17th – 30th November, 2010 in India's states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala

PCF6 is an international conference that explores the contribution of open and distance learning to international development goals by opening up access to learning at every level. The Forum brought together practitioners, researchers, planners and policy makers in the fields of open and distance learning and development from over 70 countries. It provided opportunities for dialogue among the experts and contributed to policy influence.



To learn from the Indian experiences, a Pre-PCF event was organized by COL in collaboration with India's Life Long Learning for Farmers (L3F). The lifelong learning partners participated in a 5 day pre PCF event full of field visits, community meetings and L3F partners for experience sharing sessions.

During the Pre – PCF event, UCRC got exposure on how communities can engage in self directed learning for development and the roles of ICT technology in development.. We visited women groups that use scientific knowledge at the community levels that include; women processing bio – fertilizers, managing weather stations and processing of papers.

The communities' faith and confidence in using ICT to learn about appropriate technologies and entrepreneurship development became more evident and clear during a meeting with financial institutions. This was a big meeting with over 5000 women participating and petitioning Indian banks to consider supporting development of learning by offering ICT gadgets.

The women had solicited over 25,000 signatures to support their call for further investment in developing learning materials and promotion of learning through use of appropriate technologies such as mobile phones and community newsletters.

Towards the end of the five days, all the L3F partners came for a sharing workshop where strategies for enhancing and replicating the L3 initiatives across the globe were discussed. Finally sustainability strategies such as twinning with mobile phone providers, exploring on linkages and focusing towards strengthening community banks were served as way forward. The delegates left convinced that learning can be achieved and change lifestyles if appropriate learning content is packaged in the right media.

The learning then moved to Kochi for a 700 man interactive conference for another real life experience. The conference brought many subject matter specialists, who presented papers during the parallel sessions, addressed participants as key note speakers and demonstrated various technologies at the conference.

The 6th PCF conference had 4 themes: social justice, community development, skill development and formal education. The discussions and presentations centred on these four themes with each speaker exploring on how the use of open and distance learning framework can help achieve the above themes. The training aimed at finding answers on how open and distance learning can be utilized to help improve access and success in learning for development. UCRC participated more on the social justice forum where key issues explored were the use of open and distance learning in bridging the gender gap, disability and environment among other areas.

The sessions ended with numerous questions being raised. Further explorations in focus of the raised issues are being made by Dr. K. Balasubramanian on this link ; <http://www.col.org/blog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=90>.



UCRC looks forward to building her capacity in use of ICT for promoting learning, mobilizing

community for banking and strengthening community 's identified enterprises.