



UMOJA
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

A refugee CBO since 2022

NEWSLETTER

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VISION: Refugees Are A Flourishing New Society

FOR THE BACKGROUND TO NAKIVALE REFUGEE CAMPS AND UMOJA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GO TO <https://daseintropic.au/ucf-home.html>

This is the end of year newsletter.

Best Cheers for the Season and Looking forward to a New Year full of achievement!



FROM THE CHAIR

We have had a very full and successful year.

There has been a large influx of refugees from Eastern DRC to Nakivale this year, causing a large overburden on refugee resources from UNHCR and the World Food Program. The need for a systematic approach to community development especially food security, health, housing, and livelihoods is ever more urgent to mitigate the stress of a refugee life.

I would like to take this opportunity to write something of the history of UCF so far. The history of an organization plays an important cultural role in an organization. It identifies the real life challenges that are overcome so that newcomers to the organization can become grounded in the aspirations and values of the organization that are core to future achievements. To do this I am going to use the framework of 7 stages or conversations in leadership in the development of our personal projects or contributions as they become an organization. You will all see which conversation you are participating with UCF.

The first stage is characterized by a listening to others in the network. From this listening comes an expression of an idea and a vision. This stage involved Owen Allen in Australia meeting Marius Ziganira in Nakivale Refugee Base Camp, Uganda, online. We met through the Foundation for Climate Restoration meetings in late 2020 and expanded that conversation to refugee support and development.

The Umoja Community Foundation now stands as an orientation for a modest but powerful group of international contributors and refugee workers who have been called to action by the conversation that sees refugees as a flourishing society, specifically in Nakivale, Uganda.

The second stage is characterized by the leaders remembering to be in action. When myself (Owen Allen) and Marius Ziganira began the conversation for refugee community development, we met every week for two years to develop the vision, recommit to each other, and plan small activities as experiments or pilot projects to the possibilities of flourishing community development. Over one year 2021-2022 we conducted 7 seminars based on United Nations Days, which attracted about 20 international experts in agriculture, ecosystems and community engagement. Some of those participants are now major contributors in specific fields of work. Others haven't been lost from the network of conversations and we know we can always return to a contributive conversation with them.

The first year of conversations lead to the drafting of a constitution and the registration of the Umoja Community Foundation with the Ugandan Government, structural developments that define the completion of the second stage.

The third phase of the development of an organization is characterized by the strengthening of the structural enterprise and its processes.

This is the stage we have been forging since 2023. It is a stage also defined by failures and just as we have learnt and achieved a lot from the various projects we implemented, we have had a share of failures and breakdowns. Having this extraordinary vision "Refugees Are a Flourishing New Society", demanding of myself, Marius and all participants in Nakivale and Internationally, to rise to something bigger

then ourselves, to work on behalf of others in greater need, kept us persevering, doing the next thing, make choices in action.

We realized the potential for bringing incomes into the settlement while solving problems in agriculture and water quality, especially through the manufacture of high quality biochar by the extraordinary personal and financial investment of biochar experts in the Clarke family of Wales and their colleagues in the UK and Kenya.

We noted the value of training and mentoring in leadership, project management, entrepreneurship, and post-trauma resilience with projects facilitated by Katrina Mellick of Australia, Ananda Fitzsimmons of Canada, and African Leadership Transformations.



Meetings across three continents are part of the working month for UCF. There are consultants in four continents but timezones make it very difficult to get everyone on the same zoom. Whatsapp groups provide daily working conversations for the projects and with consultants.

So as we came to 2025 we found ourselves with a new international board member in Tanzanian business consultant, Frednand Furia. During the year the organizational team has been bolstered by board advisers, Richard Fechner and Peter Doyle. We are also delighted to have new consultants in fields of: water quality and health (Lauren Brookers and Dr Japhet Nayitiriki); Cultural and Skills Centre Design (Mel Melak); energy systems(Jagdeep Singh & Remember Samu); occupational skills training and entrepreneurship (Mathew Zaranski) including for refugees with disabilities, totaling 12 international consultants from 5 countries empowering UCF programs. You will read more project details below.

During the year we made progress on drafting a full range of policies and procedures for the organization and its programs. This still needs completing and is so important so we can be known as a credible and reliable organisation and attract the funds equal to making a big impact in the fields of development we are working.

In the last quarter of the year we have hired an administrative officer, especially to complete all accounting and reports to the board each month. This has meant we have a summary review of the incomes and expenses of all the programs for the year. Beginning now and into 2026, the board will be drafting a 5 and 1 year strategic plan that reflects all the learning of the past few years.

You might be asking, what about the other stages of organizational development. I fully expect us to be in stage 4 by the middle of 2026. This stage is characterized by predictability in achievement. We can expect at least a few of our projects are providing successful outcomes from routine activities. We will be dealing with some projects that are still in the earlier stages of development. In working on a strategic

plan we can expect to consolidate the form of all the programs we will develop to realise a reliable platform for the work towards a flourishing society across Nakivale.

You and your friends can find our fundraiser at [GoFundMe](#)

All the very bests for the Season and wishing you a new year of achievement.

Owen Allen

PROGRAMS & PROJECTS - UPDATES



Biochar manufacturing saw the manufacturing team achieve certification as trainers in biochar manufacturing. This not only ensures their skill for manufacturing quality biochar but enables them to train others through online platforms, anywhere in the world. A big thanks to trainers from Kenya who travelled to Nakivale to fine tune the training.



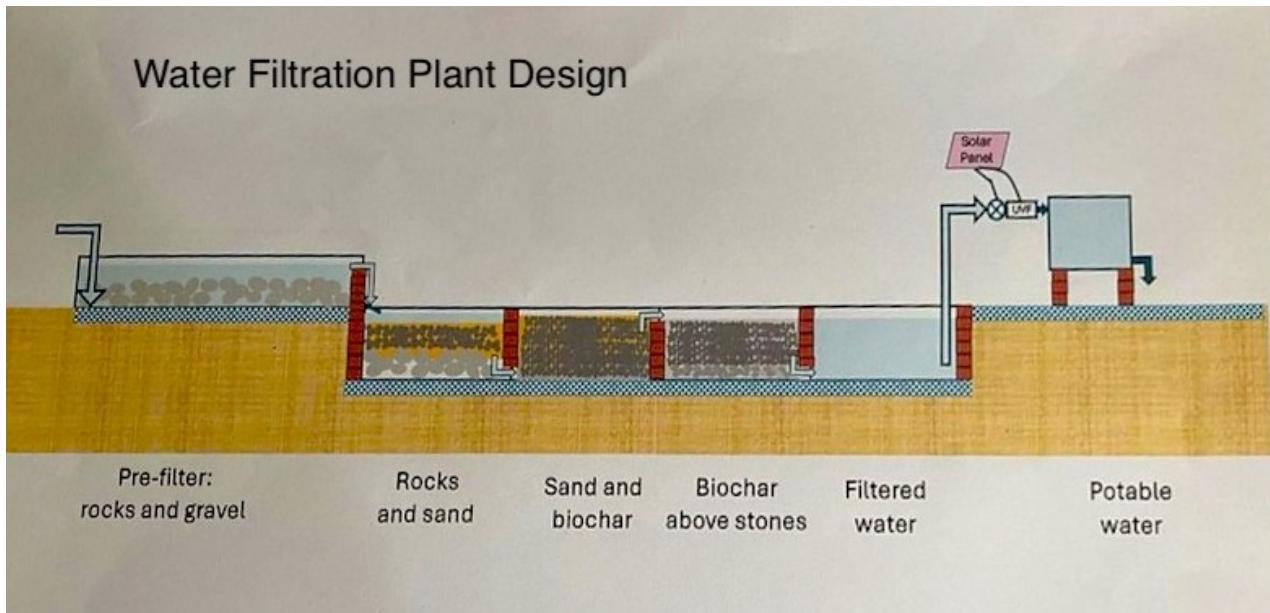
Biochar in Food Growing has shown about a doubling of bean production with approximately 1 ton per acre of biochar. The farmers are pleased and excited for what this means for food security and incomes.



Biochar carbon sales delays with the international assessors have now been largely solved. There is a two month turnaround between the manufacture of a saleable unit of carbon and the income return. However it is expected that over the next six months manufacture and sales income will become routine and fully financially self -sustaining.

Biochar water filtration plant is in a new phase of design for a larger volume of water and a stable concrete infrastructure. There have been customs delays in some equipment that has now been solved and all equipment is now with UCF in Nakivale and will be installed shortly including pumping water 300m from Lake Nakivale. Final approvals and permits are waiting for a visit from the officers of the Ugandan Dept of Water. Once these are gained, the filtration plant should be able to offer 100 families daily water with zero pathogens. Water tests will be sent to the Government Pathology Laboratories each month to ensure ongoing efficacy. Security will be established to ensure no equipment losses or deliberate contamination of the water.

Thanks to the persistence of the: biochar development team of Chris, Lionel and Mary Clarke (Wales), and Chris Neidl (USA); and the health team of Dr Desire Uzele (Nakivale) and Lauren Brooker (Australia)



The Microfinance Project

The personal savings project now has 294 members (200 women, 94 men) who each make an average small weekly profit of about \$USD2 per week from their economic activities. With the poverty line being about \$USD2 per day, these numbers give an idea of the financial challenge in front of refugees. Thanks to Bertin Munguakonkwa for working with market sellers to save with UCF and providing literacy training for them.

MicroFinance Loans Scheme will be introduced in 2026. UCF will be actively looking for partners who can provide a capital fund to commence a micro-loan program. Once we achieve \$USD5000 in a capital fund we will begin offering small capital loans with a rapid repayment turn around (2-4weeks) for equipment and materials for new business, or expanding productivity and sales.

Women's Entrepreneurship Training now called **Women's Agriculture and Livelihoods Program**, championed by Ananda Fitzsimmons has begun training in permaculture and soap-making. They have a devoted fundraiser through ZEFFY at the [UCF website](#)

Young Entrepreneurs Projects were funded by Mareeba Rotary Club, Australia at the beginning of 20025 and the successful outcomes of these can be viewed on [youtube](#).

Mental Health. Faye Nour, a trauma counsellor from Australia, has been meeting with a refugee women around trauma, trauma-acquired disabilities, and mental health. They have created a wholistic mental health program including trauma conversations, physical activities such a Qi Gong, and participant outreach with other women especially new refugees. Thanks to the Rotary Club of Fairbanks, Sydney for a donation

to making these meetings happen. The Qi Gong training was introduced by of Canada.

Cultural and Skills Centre Project.

Mauricio Umann, designer from Portugal and Mel Melak, architect from Melbourne, continue to progress the design for a skills and training centre. We are looking forward to a fully rendered 3 D design in early 2026.

Energy Systems.

Jagdeep Singh NSW and Remember Samu WA of Australia have made an initial survey of the Nakivale energy system.

A proposal has come from the refugee network to develop a pilot project in biogas from waste, based on a school facility. The project would be able to provide direct piped gas to about 100 homes in the vicinity of the school. Its value is in providing access to clean cooking and reducing deforestation from the landscape.

Uwezo (Abilities) Program has not progressed this year. UCF has made promises to a recent meeting of refugees with disabilities to fundraise for occupational equipment in already existing skill areas e.g. bootmaking, clothesmaking, bakery.

Refugees with disabilities once again participated in the annual **On Display Global** event of the **Heidi Latsky Dance Company of New York**, towards empowering people with disabilities in performing arts and life. You can find a few of the participant groups on video, [on youtube](#) .

The last word goes to UCF Tanzanian Board member, Frednand Furia who expressed the following at our last board meeting for the year.

Praise and congratulations to the entire board, local board members and the international board members because today is the last board meeting for this year when we tried to do some sort of an evaluation from the beginning of the year,

We have achieved tremendous milestones and big achievement. We have laid the foundations for the good governance. We've seen some projects that bear tangible benefits.

I do believe that next year we will accomplish a lot as now we have all these pipelines (in place). My emphasis at the time I joined this board (and since) was to see the governance system is in place.

And today we have (an administrative officer) in-house. We are glad to have members, consultants from various regions, from Australia and all over the world trying to contribute to the Umoja Community Foundation. So I really feel honored

For all these achievements, the next year a lot will be accomplished (especially that) community members will benefit from microfinance savings and loans.

With that, thank you Chairman and Richard (Fechner) and all the board members for your presence for this entire year and with that I just raise my hat. Thank you so much.

