

South Sudan Fresh from the Field

worldrenew.net

March 2015

worldrenew.net/southsudan

Hedd Thomas
Country Representative
hthomas@worldrenew.net

World Renew Canada
3475 Mainway
PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8
1-800-730-3490
Fax: 905-336-8344

World Renew US
1700 28th Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508
1-800-552-7972
Fax: 616-224-8060

Morobo County, January 2015. Mrs. Kenyi Bullen Tabu is a Congolese refugee who participated in a 2014 World Renew agriculture project in South Sudan. She now has a very good store of corn and peanuts. She plans to sell a small surplus of her crop to pay for household items. Because of this project, life for Kenyi is much more sustainable than it would have been in a refugee camp.



Refugees Grow Their Own Food A Story of Transformation



By Hedd Thomas
Country Representative
South Sudan Team

Morobo County, South Sudan.

Although South Sudan has become well known in recent years for civil war, famine, and sickness, this beleaguered country also provides shelter for refugees from the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo, better known as the Congo. Refugees from the Congo have been fleeing into South Sudan because of fighting between their government and various rebel armies. But in reality, they flee from one country in conflict straight into another.

Some of the refugees go into camps where they become dependent on food aid and UN support, but in 2014 World Renew worked with the local authorities to help 125 refugee families (about 750 people in all) to settle on the land and start growing food so they could avoid the corruption and dependency of camp life.

Late in 2012, the local council gave each refugee family about one and a half acres of good land to work for food. World Renew then provided the families with seeds, tools, and training. Most of the refugees had previously been farmers in the Congo, so they had skills that they could adapt to their current situation, farming here in South Sudan.

We were aware that some refugees would want to go home as soon as possible, but a UN survey revealed that most refugees planned to stay in South Sudan for several years because of the chronic insecurity in the eastern Congo. We were amazed to know that South Sudan was considered a better bet than the Congo—things must be really tough there.

Knowing that the refugees could farm and wanted to grow crops, we quickly started a small agriculture project. The first steps were to get to know



Morobo County, June 2014. Mrs. Dawa Yuda Scovia, a refugee from the Congo stands beside her corn field. She intercropped peanuts between the corn rows to use her land to the maximum. Peanuts also fix nitrogen into the soil which helps the corn to grow well.

the refugees' leaders, register the families, and discuss project options with the community. Soon after, seeds and tools were purchased and a training program was designed.

By the first planting season of 2014, the project was making great progress and the small fields were being planted with corn, peanuts, and sorghum. A dry spell in May and June reduced the corn yield to some extent, but the first season was at least partially successful and harvests were gathered in. In many cases the refugees gathered some of the best harvests of peanuts they had seen because we had trained them in several simple but effective farming methods.

The second planting season in this area starts in August, and we provided a few more seeds and some training for this phase. The second crop of corn and peanuts, harvested in November and December, were good. By January 2015, when we did a crop survey, we found that most of the families had achieved a significant level of self-sufficiency in at least the basic staple foods.

Disabled Farmers Making Progress

A Story of Transformation

Yei River County, South Sudan.

Mrs. Edna Tiyu is a farmer in Pukuka near Yei in South Sudan and enrolled in the World Renew agriculture project. Edna is disabled, but she and her husband have recently made significant progress in food production. In 2014 Edna received training, seeds, tools, and frequent follow-up visits from our extension staff to enable her to emerge from marginal subsistence to being a successful farmer.

The World Renew program in South Sudan provides poor families with agricultural supports that enable them to become self-sufficient in food availability, get out of the poverty trap, and have surplus food available either for sale or to barter with (exchange) in the village. The program is supported by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank in Winnipeg, MB. World Renew also broadcasts farm radio programs four times each week on two local FM stations to provide listeners in the Yei area with weekly market prices and tips and advice on recommended farming methods. World Renew's Soro Stewart designs the radio programs and records them in our small, home-made, recording studio.

The World Renew radio program is called Roro Lo Kakuru (Voice of the Farmers), and in December 2014 Edna was invited to give her testimony about the transformation that has occurred on her farm because of her involvement in the agriculture project and the weekly farm radio programs.

During the radio interview Edna was asked what she's learned from the World Renew training. She listed several key farming methods that she and her husband are now using, including planting in straight rows, proper spacing between seeds and between rows, weeding much earlier than they did when they used traditional farming methods, piling earth around the larger seedlings, thinning out seedlings where necessary, and removing diseased stems.

Edna's overall approach to farming has also changed: she now knows the importance of good land preparation, intercropping (planting rows of legumes between rows of corn for example), and crop rotation.

Edna was then asked about the main changes she experienced in the past year and she said, "As you can see I have grey hair, and I'm also disabled, so I have faced many challenges. But in 2014 I have had the best crops ever seen on this farm. On a half-acre plot I produced 7 large sacks of corn, and I sold two of those and kept 5 for our family. That has helped me so much."

As she continued to talk, Edna became excited about being on the radio and started to urge listeners to adopt the new farming methods: "I want to see all farmers in this area using string to mark out straight rows for planting, and piling earth on the cassava when it starts to grow quickly. Our country can produce great riches if we all farm well. We can be the farmers who sell produce instead of being the ones who are always looking for help."



(l-r) Edna, Soro Stewart, and Joyce Jaguru, record an interview.

As the interview came to a close, Soro Stewart added some words of encouragement. "Farmer training and listening to farm radio are very important: those who don't listen and fail to practice better farming methods will have very little to eat, and they will soon be crying for food. I encourage everyone in Pukuka to be serious about farming and follow the example of Edna and her husband. Other farmers who did the same training as Edna have grown enough food to enable them to sell some for cash that they used to pay school fees and buy books for their children. That is the way forward—farming well and educating our youth."

With those words of encouragement the radio program ended, and Edna became very well known in the area. She enjoyed being interviewed and listened to the program later that week with her family. Not only has she grown a lot of food, but she's also been on the radio, so 2014 ended very well for Edna. She has also become an excellent role model for other disabled farmers.

Global Volunteer Program

You can volunteer in South Sudan!

There is always the possibility for discovery tours and learning groups from supporting churches.

See also: worldrenew.net/globalvolunteerprogram