

Northwest University

Empowering Fragile Contexts

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*“Conflict and fragility
remain the biggest threats
to human development”*

--Ban Ki-moon
UN Secretary-General

*“The approaches to development that I have
used for years are very good, but after working
with Empowered Worldview, I feel they’re
missing something: unlocking people’s spiritual
poverty. It’s like they have a car, but they are
missing the key, so they can’t start the engine.
That key is in the Word of God.”*

--Alice Yugi, World Vision Kenya

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ACRONYMS

AP	Area Program
CBDRM	Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ECaP	Empowering Children as Peacebuilders
EWV	Empowered World View
FC	Fragile Contexts
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KII	Key Informant Interview
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NO	National Office
PDI	Power Distance Index
SO	Support Office
WFP	World Food Programme
WNRR	West Nile Response Office
WV	World Vision
WVI	World Vision International
WVU	World Vision Uganda

INTRODUCTION

The world is becoming increasingly more fragile, and its people, more vulnerable. By 2039, it is expected that 82% of the world's poorest will live in fragile states (UNDP). Communities will need adaptive solutions to address growing vulnerabilities and build capacity for greater resilience. This thesis explores the challenges and opportunities in Uganda's West Nile region and presents a strong case for employing World Vision's Empowered World View (EWV) model as an integral part of a sustainable development program.

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) and other resilience-oriented interventions can be introduced to communities, but these are impossible to sustain without widespread changes in personal and corporate world views that shape our sense of motivation, responsibility, and freedom for self-determination. Empowered World View—a model pioneered by World Vision (WV)—“unleashes the creative freedom, strength of character, and individual responsibility” of individuals in the community that is necessary for transformational change (Muvengi 2). A central component informing worldview is religious faith, partly because over two thirds of the world's nearly eight billion inhabitants identify with some religious expression. Faith, then, is an integral factor informing peoples' worldview, and leveraging faith traditions to transform worldviews is necessary for building resilience and for transitioning individuals and communities from a cycle of fragility to a path of sustainable development. To better ensure a successful and sustainable transition to long-term development programming, international development organizations should adapt and integrate World Vision's EWV model into their plan for the West Nile Refugee Response.

Through researching academic literature and my personal field documentation in the West Nile of Uganda plus Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD),

I have sought to understand the regional context and the perspective of the communities themselves. This qualitative analysis incorporates primary and secondary data to explore reasons contributing to the complexity of fragility and to express the need for development models that lift up the voices of the community, voices that are the source of change for the future.

This thesis consists of three parts. The first examines why Ugandans feel disempowered from the perspective of program staff and community members expressing their disempowerment first hand. This section also includes a brief history of the West Nile region which provides context for understanding the present refugee and host dynamics, cultural worldviews, and the dangers of aid dependency. The second part of the thesis explores the fundamentals of empowerment via the EWV model and its prior successes in transforming communities. The final section of the thesis highlights the EWV principles that international development organizations can and should apply to their proposal for the West Nile Refugee Response to better ensure sustainable long-term development.

I argue that rather than a radical shift to prevent the next humanitarian crisis, we in community development need to reexamine something fundamental, something so straightforward that it has been too-long overlooked—worldviews. Before seeking success via any substantive transformational change, we must address worldviews which can be the greatest obstacles or the most significant assets for sustainable development. Practitioners must focus on the effective, working approach to development and be less concerned with one specific sector or set of interventions. I want to challenge international development organizations to consider adapting and applying models such as EWV to assist in building capacity and resiliency, beginning at the grassroots levels of society, to inform, unify, and empower local communities so that they are equipped to design and sustain their own future.

PART I: UNDERSTANDING THE UGANDAN FRAGILE CONTEXT

Poverty as a Complex, Defining Factor in Fragile Contexts.

The first step in applying the EWV lens is to understand the part it plays in poverty. The idea that poverty is more than material is not new, yet it remains consistently misunderstood across humanitarian relief and development agencies worldwide. This is evident in the way both relief and development activities are designed and implemented. From the top levels of organizational structures down to the very communities in the field, the attitudes and beliefs we hold about who we are remain the most potent factors of our resilience. All people (and organizations) are driven by these deeply held and often subconscious principles—their worldview.

We must start from understanding why people are poor rather than operate from our own assumptions. As author Bryant Myers explains, “[w]ork spent articulating one’s assumptions about how the world works, why it is as it is, and what might improve it is worth doing. It will make life easier for the poor, and should make us more effective” (107). We must name our assumptions and allow ourselves to learn from and change through what we understand through the experience of others. When we are honest about it, we can see that layers below the surface help contribute to the poverty in material form that is manifested before our eyes.

Despite what we know to be true about poverty and despite our best attempts to uncover its root causes, we often cannot get beyond the physical. As Myers articulates, “[m]ost governments and many agencies define poverty entirely in material terms” (21). They see the practical, not the spiritual; they do not maintain the biblical worldview that identifies poverty’s core cause to be human sin and the resulting broken relationships. For this reason, even their

“holistic” approach is filled with holes. Only by understanding the spiritual and systemic nature of poverty do we have a chance to affect substantive change. These are illusive dynamics that are deeply embedded and often well-disguised but quite real. Poverty, then, is a complicated, multi-layered fact. Myers warns, “It is easy to blame greed, systems, the market, corruption and culture, but these are abstractions and cannot be directly changed. People—the poor and the non-poor—have to change” (132). Addressing the complex issues in fragile contexts requires that we maintain focus on the people and find new ways to inspire and empower them to step up and out of poverty. Empowerment is the way from fragility to stable development, and a holistic view of poverty reveals that true empowerment entails a new vision.

Defining and Exploring the Concept of Fragile Contexts. Any discussion of transitions from relief to development programming necessitates an understanding of key terminology. The first, essential phrase is “fragile context.” WV defines a fragile state or context as a low-income country characterized by weak state capacity and legitimacy such as civil unrest and epidemics which leave citizens vulnerable to a range of shocks. In political circles, or conversations on foreign policy, some may refer to these places as “failed states,” and in some cases, these are one and the same. However, a nuance to the term appears when it speaks to a set of social, economic, and political indicators that determine a degree shifting fragility. It sees vulnerabilities along a scale and acknowledges that countries and regions within those countries can experience a changing degree of vulnerability, thereby changing their risk and opportunities.

Fragile contexts can define both entire countries as well as smaller areas within more stable countries. In an interview with WV Emergency Response Team Program Manager Debebe Dawit, he calls these “pockets of fragility” and insists that they are increasingly areas where we need to focus. Across the humanitarian sphere, development professionals echo Debebe’s

concern, warning that the elements affecting fragility can easily spread, thereby destabilizing nearby regions. Such is the concern with Uganda and the need to address the sustainability of the West Nile. According to the World Atlas, Uganda is bordered by numerous countries considered to be among the most fragile in the world, including South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). As a result, this fragile area of Northern Uganda presents an opportunity to pilot new models that can effectively address challenges there and in other pockets of instability around the world.

Within these fragile contexts, the risks and exposure to conflict, disaster, and extreme poverty are higher than the coping capacities of the state, social system, and communities to deal with them (USAID). Causes of fragility include conflict, extreme poverty, and high vulnerability to natural disasters. Additional factors are broken public institutions, broken social contracts between state and society, and broken social relationships. Often, in fragile contexts, the government is either unable or unwilling to provide basic services or protection; children suffer high levels of violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect; and an underlying uncertainty threatens future possibilities. Author of *Disaster and Development*, Andrew Collins argues that “underlying causes of vulnerability to disaster must be interpreted in terms of complex development processes” (Collins 4). In fact, disaster and development represent two sides to the same coin and dueling sides to alleviating poverty. Disaster relief and development exist on the same continuum. However, the space “in between” crisis and stability—essential to understand—is the focus of this thesis.

The sheer number of definitions applied to the term “disaster” illustrates the scope of the intense threat disasters present to the world. Collins defines disaster as “any severe disruption to human survival and security that overwhelms a peoples’ capacity to cope” (4). Disasters can be

complex, natural or man-made, acute (rapid onset) or chronic (slow-onset). Rapid onset events are usually natural disasters that quickly bring severe and swift destruction. A slow-onset emergency is defined as one “that does not emerge from a single, distinct event but one that emerges gradually over time, often based on a confluence of different events” (OCHA 3). In most fragile contexts, as is the case with the West Nile, the focus of disaster relief is on the effects of protracted conflicts.

Collins explains more broadly that “disaster occurs through exposure to an adverse hazard...being in the ‘wrong place’ at the ‘wrong time’ with inadequate forms of protection” (14). If ever response capacities are overwhelmed—for whatever reason—there will be another disaster. No society can prepare for every potential threat, and development practices will either contribute to or take away a country’s and a peoples’ resilience to these events. Some vulnerabilities are visible and some are hidden deep below the surface of society. To effectively address them, we must see them as part of the larger development process. They are symptoms of root causes that have to be defined and dealt with.

Fragility looks different in different countries, and solutions are not one size fits all. Given that many of the vulnerabilities are influenced by systemic factors and touch every stakeholder, addressing world view and empowering communities at the lowest level is only a beginning. It is one piece of a greater puzzle and works to catalyze civic participation and mobilize the people to spur on larger change. WV is committed to increasing its presence in fragile contexts to 20 percent by the year 2030 as indicated by the partnership’s strategic plan “[b]y 2030, we expect that a higher percentage of the most vulnerable children will be in fragile contexts. We plan careful, immediate expansion in fragile contexts...” (Our Promise 2030). Given that not all fragile contexts are equal, decisions for new programming require a

customized approach and carefully consideration of both the operational risks and the financial capacity necessary to achieve beneficial impact. As it makes operational and strategic sense, this new partnership vision will prioritize fragile contexts. Though the current World Vision sponsorship model is not conducive for most contexts, an adapted sponsorship program model may be an option. This will be discussed in greater depth in the section on the West Nile Response.

In the WV documentation on *Fragile Context Program Approach*, the authors provide guidance for field offices and information on strategy, assessment, program design/implementation and monitoring and evaluation. This guidance was considered when developing the West Nile response to transition to longer-term development. WV brought together experts in disaster management, corporate security, strategy, peacebuilding, partnering and transformational development in the creation of this document. It serves as a launching point for addressing root causes of fragility include restoring relationships, renewing hope and defending dignity. This is where the EWW can complement this partnership plan.

Understanding the Effects of Disaster and Crisis in Fragile Contexts. Disaster is the result of human development not having adapted adequately to avoid crisis. Collins supports this, writing “[a] disaster is recognizable as a consequence of there being insufficient development as a means of avoiding human crisis, or as an aspect of development itself having been the cause of the crisis” (14). According to this definition, existing fragility can cause disaster or even further instability and it speaks to a loss of potential, or a loss of human security (Collins 4). The idea that the right type of development reduces the risk of disaster is paramount and follows the notion that rightly equipped, supported communities can avoid most “disasters”; just as the wrong type of relief response can compromise the future of sustainable development (Collins

1). It is essential that both relief and development work consider what it means for communities to cope and what resilience looks like in each context. In Uganda, the communities seem to have lost confidence in their capabilities. They have a passivity and unwillingness to participate in solutions, so the way forward is difficult. However, they can start small and build their coping abilities. Collins encourages us that “[w]hilst insecurity is overall bad for development, the reality is, that under pressure, people cope and become resilient, reducing disaster impacts significantly” (5).

The Ugandan Fragile Context

Historical and Field Perspectives: Understanding Cultural Contexts and Why Ugandan’s Feel Disempowered. The West Nile region in Northern Uganda serves as a fascinating and illuminating case study for the future of working in fragile contexts. Population stability, relative government support, and other factors have made this country suitable to pilot models that address certain aspects of fragility and community resilience. Moreover, this region has experienced numerous protracted crises from decades of civil conflict to the present refugee influx that make it a perfect test subject to learn about adaptive development and transitioning from relief to more sustainable development approaches.

Formerly known as Burganda, named by the British on their expedition to locate the source of the Nile, various territories became part of the British protectorate. Uganda as it is known today became officially defined by 1914. Under British colonial rule, the people of the south were favored over those in the north and received preferential treatment by the British officers. This favoritism created a divide between the Ugandan people that led to a civil war between the north and south following the country’s independence in 1962. The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) was one of many rebel groups that came to power in the north during

this time. Though most of the conflict concentrated east of the Lugbara province in the West Nile region, ethnic groups were connected through the northern region. The result of this conflict has left devastation across families and communities throughout the entire northern region. In 1966, many of the region's dominant ethnic group—the Acholi—were forcibly resettled in camps. (Acemah). To this day, an entire generation of Ugandan's are living the consequences of this tumultuous period of their history.

The West Nile has always been a multi-ethnic region, which continues to be a source of both tension and strength. The international boundaries of Uganda cut across these ethnic groups and tie them together in significant ways. The DRC and Ugandan boundary partitions the Alur and Lugbara tribes while the South Sudanese and Ugandan boundary partitions the Kakwa and Madi tribes. Because of this partition, what happens in the DRC and South Sudan has a direct impact on the population of the West Nile (Acemah). Additionally, Sudan and the DRC are among the most volatile and fragile states in the world, experiencing high levels of conflict and displacement. The effects of these situations have spilled over into Uganda, bringing over a million refugees to the West Nile region.

Across the border in newly formed South Sudan, conflict continues to rage, driving millions from their homes. Now surpassing two million refugees, it has become the largest refugee crisis in Africa and the third largest in the world after Syria and Afghanistan. (South Sudan Refugee Crisis 5). Those fleeing South Sudan have taken refuge across seven countries, but Uganda continues to harbor the majority of those affected. Currently, there are more than one million South Sudanese settled in the West Nile region of Uganda, of which, 82% are women and children (South Sudan Refugee Crisis 6). These displaced persons bring with them new customs and languages that add cultural complexity to the relief and development agenda. One

such manifestation of this has been the need to settle two of the primary South Sudanese tribes (Dinka and Nuer) in separate areas throughout the region. In this case, the threat is not violence between refugee and host communities, but between the South Sudanese themselves. This will be a consideration for the future of peace in the region. When asked about how this situation will be handled, Ugandan monitoring officer Lawrence Okello admitted that “it will not be easy, because they don’t meet.” Although many challenges have resulted from this crisis, there are opportunities for the region unlike in other refugee contexts. What sets Uganda apart from the other international refugee responses has been the government’s approach to resettlement.

The Government of Uganda has embraced an integrated settlement approach to the regional refugee response including:

Freedom of movement, the right to work and establish businesses, the right to documentation and access to national social services. The country pursues a non-camp settlement policy, by which refugees are allocated plots of land (Between 30 x 30 and 50 x 50 metres) for shelter and agricultural production, stretching out over vast territories. This aligns with the Ugandan governments 2016 Refugees Act, promotes refugee self-reliance and favours a development-based approach to refugee assistance.

Implementation of REHOPE and other humanitarian intervention draws expertise from the various district local governments. (MICAH 5)

This unprecedented resettlement approach is one that is concurrently being piloted in Ethiopia and is consistent with findings from evaluations of other refugee contexts that cite a central constraint as the inability for refugees to work outside the camps. This issue goes beyond livelihoods opportunities to include access to education and services as well as participation in political, social, and economic life. Not receiving these benefits can lead to refugees’ seeking

illicit alternatives for income and to meet their basic needs. Relief items meant for children and needy families end up on a black market to secure cash or other essentials. According to a recent Economist article, “nearly 90% [of refugees] reside in poor countries. In many places, to preserve jobs for natives, governments bar refugees from working in the formal economy” (“Let them Work”). Refugees, thus, must stay in refugee camps, relying on UN handouts and living in a kind of limbo. In fact, “one study from 2016 found that the presence of Congolese refugees in western Uganda had increased consumption per household. Another estimates that each new refugee household boosts total local income, including that of refugees, by \$320-430 more than the cost of the aid the household is given” (Hunt 1).

The combination of the generous resettlement policy and the continued instability in South Sudan make it unlikely that the refugees will return to their homes within at least the next five years. Even when peace agreements are decided, the South Sudanese do not trust them, and they have additional incentives to stay in the West Nile. This sentiment was repeated during group discussions with refugee villagers who shared what it has been like since they came to Uganda. In a crowded pavilion under the mid-day sun, men, women and youth described the challenges they face. Reflecting on the discussion, Lawrence sighed rhetorically, “If there is peace in Uganda, why would they want to go back and die?” Clearly, this situation will continue for many years.

The long-term reality of the refugee presence in Northern Uganda can have a positive impact if managed correctly. The UN states that, generally, migrants spend 85% of earnings in their host countries, with the other 15% going back to their home countries in the form of remittances (“Let them Work”). Offering opportunities to refugees to contribute to the local and global economy by working has the potential not only to give a boost to the countries to which

they fled, but also to give them a way to connect to their new communities and surroundings.

The challenge becomes one of identifying viable livelihood options and addressing the mind-sets that get in the way of embracing new economic opportunities.

Across the world, millions continue to violence and conflict. The situation in most refugee camps is often not much better than the conditions that they fled. When mismanaged, the camp experience can lead to refugees feeling dehumanized, public health crises arising (both physical and mental), and economic dependency due to lack of work. Author Amy Hunt argues for different solutions in her article on the realities of life as a refugee:

One way to combat and perhaps even prevent these problems is to work with refugees and host countries to ensure that everyone involved feels a sense of empowerment: that refugees have the chance to contribute and work and support themselves and their families, and that the locals still feel as if they are in control of their communities as well. It's far from an easy task, one that takes tremendous sensitivity and cross-cultural understanding on the part of both aid workers, community members, government officials, and refugees themselves, but Uganda shows that it can be and has been done. (Hunt 2).

Another aspect of the resettlement process in the West Nile that sets it apart, is a shared connection to protracted violence that both groups have faced. We are reminded that the "South Sudanese refugees have fled into Uganda only after being exposed to intense levels of sexual and physical violence, disease, malnutrition and other forms of exploitation and abuse" (WNRR 2018). The impact of extended conflict and compounded trauma on both Ugandans and South Sudanese provides a basis for a shared understanding. While this understanding helps us see how Ugandans' empathetic response may stem from their own experience with violence and conflict,

it makes it vital to consider each culture's unique story as we consider the needs for resilience building in the region.

The next important consideration for understanding the context of the West Nile is the impact from the presence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through the response efforts. Though these organizations have provided life-saving assistance to more than a million men, women and children, their presence has also had a negative effect. To be fair, the effect from foreign powers and organizations goes much farther back and predates the refugee crisis in the North, but that history is not the central focus of this paper. Some staff I interviewed, however, believe a culture of passivity and learned helplessness has been cultivated over generations and is a force that all change-makers must reckon with. Add to this, the dependency created by aid agencies, and the challenge becomes great indeed.

Crowded in a small district office in Arua, discussing the state of region, WV Ugandan Protection Officer, Philiam Adriko explained that “the level of volunteerism is low...and there is a lot of expectations of handouts.” This concern was echoed by the staff during my time in Arua, begging the question—“what will happen when all the NGOs leave?” Presently, over 80 agencies work in Arua alone, and it is only one of seven districts in the regional response. After spending a total of four weeks in Uganda over two separate trips, I started to see how the historical lens of the West Nile region and the relief and development experience provide a unique perspective around how to engage with the communities for maximum results. As part of the process of contextualization, my field research was complimented by another layer—learnings from Geert Hofstede's indices of national culture.

Learning new perspectives challenges our assumptions and inspires humility—this is the greatest benefit of integrating the five indices of national culture into international work. These

dimensions within a country influence all levels of society from the basic family unit to national institutions. Understanding the common values in these specific areas can help to determine how best to approach a community, work within the community to design a program, co-implement the program, and evaluate the results. Though there is much to gain from incorporating this research, it is essential to avoid over-generalizing and assuming too much. Within a country, significant diversity of language, religion, and ethnicity may contradict Hofstede's findings. These dynamics affect the way sub-cultures across a country have experienced certain political, social, and economic events resulting in a variety of perspectives and behaviors. With each dimension are examples of both the potential for positive and negative consequences when applying these results to development and relief work. With a conservative and open application of the most relevant cultural insights, practitioners can target root causes with greater accuracy and develop more effective interventions in Uganda. Of Hofstede's core indices of national culture, we should take a deeper examination of Power Distance Index (PDI), Individualism versus collectivism (IDV), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), and Long-Term Orientation (LTO) to complement our contextual analysis (Hofstede).

The Power Distance Index (PDI) measures the extent to which a society extols authority. Under the PDI, the less powerful members of society accept that power is distributed unequally and have a greater innate respect for authority structures. This impacts all levels of society. Countries with a low PDI have a strong belief in equality for their citizens, and the citizens have the opportunity to rise in society. Difference in power distance between cultures is an important area that international development workers and advocates must understand, especially in fragile contexts. Because high-power distance is most closely aligned with poorer developing countries (Hofstede 83), development work is concentrated in cultural environments where fewer people

hold a disproportionate amount of power. Communities expect inequalities and accept that less powerful people should be dependent on those with greater wealth and prestige. In general, these attitudes make community empowerment and ownership challenging concepts to grasp. As practitioners, being cognizant of our own low-power distance values can be useful as we adapt the way we introduce a project and work within the existing community traditions and power dynamics. This awareness can save a lot of time and result in better outcomes for both low developing and fragile contexts.

The PDI is perhaps the most critical cultural dimension for understanding the present world view of Ugandans. Uganda has not been measured, but a composite value of 64 is given for East Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia). Ugandan culture, either resulting from colonialism or other circumstances, is strongly rooted in hierarchy. In Uganda, political leaders are everything. Local leaders are powerful players in all matters, and dictates from the higher levels of government are often followed without question. The ruling party in Uganda—the National Resistance Movement (NRM)—operates with impunity and quells any opposition that threatens its power. This dynamic has happened over time, as the president has consolidated the party and military power.

During my field research in the district of Arua, West Nile, I experienced first-hand the abuse of presidential power and the very real institutional challenges that the Ugandans face. The district of Arua is a strategic area because of the political representation in the national legislature. The previous office holder was from the NRM but was assassinated. The people believe that he had been removed by his own party for not conforming to the party agenda. The resulting special election that occurred while I was visiting the refugee settlements around the city was extremely tense and even became violent. Leading up to the election were protests

against government corruption and in support of party candidates, along with an obscene military presence. Soldiers camped along every road as there were not places sufficient to house them. The night before the election brought an assassination attempt on the leading opposition candidate. His driver was killed, and then he was arrested for allegedly having a gun in the car. Along with him, three other candidates were arrested for attempted treason, though their crime was never explained or proven. They were taken to an undisclosed place and released weeks later. At this same time, two reporters that covered the event went missing for 48 hours after their broadcast.

These events were unfolding over the days that I was working with WV staff, and I had many opportunities to speak with nationals who shared their concern for safety of the people and the lack of a fair and free election. The day of the election, my hotel—that hosted the majority of the NRA party members—was surrounded by armed members of the opposition. They accused the hotel of hiding extra ballots for the NRM candidate. This tactic had been used before to influence elections. For many hours, I was unsure as to what was going to happen. The opposition demanded entry, and there were more men with guns than I was able to count.

Indeed, it was a memorable experience, and it reminded me that the negative consequences disempowered people face, are most severe for the most vulnerable. Many Ugandans I spoke with feel that the country is set on a powder keg of tension between various tribes that have been regionally managed under the current president. This tension, combined with the general acceptance of authority, leaves the people less likely to engage in meaningful ways to change their country. Realistically, such change carries with it a serious degree of risk. One of the ways Ugandans and South Sudanese can overcome this obstacle, however, is to leverage their combined strength through a communal vision. In fact, beyond the power

dynamic, the collectivist nature of the West Nile people plays a significant role in the way EWV can be employed to empower the host and refugee communities.

Collectivism and individualism measure how one defines the self against the society as a whole. On the individualism scale, USA scores 91 and East Africa scores 27. (Hofstede 128). Culturally, Ugandans are generally a collective people. There is a great deal of value to be celebrated in collectivist societies, where the group cares for one another and prioritizes the “greater good.” The challenge, however, is the way that a society is divided into “in-groups” and “out-groups.” While much connects the peoples of the West Nile region, the refugees also represent a group of “others” being forced upon the local host communities. Though empathetic, many Ugandans worry about surviving and thriving in an already stressed environment with limited resources and devastating poverty. This parallel situation highlights the need to bring the groups together in relief and development efforts. The West Nile Regional Response (WNRR) is already beginning to address this need through peacebuilding initiatives with youth, but the projects are still in their early phase and struggling to pick up momentum. EWV could serve as a way to focus on the common ground between the groups, thus de-emphasizing the narrow group mentality and accentuating the ways in which they can work together, thus re-enforcing their collective voice. Once the community is united in vision, the members can begin to address sustainability, which is affected by how they manage the uncertainty of their situation and immediacy of their needs.

Uncertainty avoidance (UAI) and long-term orientation (LTO) are the final two indices that must be considered when approaching community-based development and relief work. For both cultural dimensions, developing countries fall across the spectrum, and many are ranked in the middle, expressing a mixed response to these values. Uncertainty avoidance looks at a

society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity and generally refers to the search for truth. It indicates how members of society feel comfortable or uncomfortable in unstructured situations. Uncertainty avoiding societies create and adhere to strict laws and rules. Germany avoids uncertainty (65), but life is completely uncertain in Singapore (8). East Africa is on the lower end of the uncertainty spectrum and has an LTO rating of 25. With uncertainty avoidance, Hofstede observes that “[w]hen anxiety levels in a country increase, uncertainty avoidance increases” (233). For fragile contexts, plagued by civil war, this anxiety is especially relevant. Long-term orientation focuses more on “the fostering of virtues oriented toward future rewards,” while “short-term orientation, stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present...” (Hofstede 239). It is essential to consider whether or not these insights have a significant impact on the way communities view and engage with long-term development programs as opposed to humanitarian aid in the form of hand-outs. There is significant value in exploring these dynamics further, especially as countries transition from fragile to more stable contexts.

Responses to Uganda's Fragile Contexts

West Nile Refugee Response. Until recently, the primary programmatic focus in the West Nile has been a relief response. This is beginning to change and all stakeholders including the UN coordinating agencies, local NGOs and government officials understand that a new approach needs to be developed. With a certain reduction in relief assistance just beyond the horizon, it is of the utmost importance for WV (and others) to design a transition that will build the capacities of the refugee and host communities not only to continue meeting their basic needs, but also to prepare for the shocks that lie ahead.

The Integrated Settlement Assistance Program was first proposed by the WNRR and is a precursor to the current MICA program proposal. This program documentation provides a

baseline for the adaptive development approach in the West Nile region. It contains context specific to Uganda and challenges faced by the host and refugee populations and highlights aspects of the WV Uganda national strategy, including the focus on community empowerment and resilience building. This served as a central point of reference for the supplementary research I carried out in Uganda to validate the needs in the region.

The MICAH program was proposed and will serve as the next response phase in the region. This multi-year, multi-sectoral programming approach aims to enhance resilience and social cohesion amongst the most vulnerable in Northern Uganda. This design draws upon learning from the organization's Area Program (AP) and the Area Rehabilitation Program (ARP) approaches. WV Sponsorship specialists assessed the feasibility for sponsorship in the settlement areas and determined that it would be a good place to pilot an adapted version of our traditional sponsorship model. The study found that child sponsorship and area programmes are feasible with refugees in the region, if critical sponsorship risks are managed appropriately (West Nile Sponsorship Feasibility 4). After a pilot phase, it is expected that the program will be scaled up throughout the refugee hosting districts in the area and in relevant contexts in other countries. During my time in the West Nile, I supported the needs assessment and preliminary design of the MICAH concept, which included recommendations for use of EWV. Of the four central objectives in the final design, the incorporation of EWV was identified as essential for the program to empower individuals at the household level and enhance social cohesion between the refugees and host communities.

The program staff will need to place increasing emphasis on conflict sensitive programming and interventions that promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities. This outcome is consistent with my findings from document

reviews and through discussions across parishes in Arua. As is stated in the program proposal, “The sub-county is composed of one ethnic tribe, namely, the Lugbara. Majority of the Sub-county dwellers are Christians (90%) followed by Muslims (7%) and others (3%) and women make [up] higher proportion (53%)” (MICAH 7). Hostility between the host community and refugees has caused security incidents and continues to rise; these conflicts are resource driven. This finding acknowledges that special attention must be paid to the balance of support between both the refugee and host communities. For host communities, the program will help develop physical assets, and with refugees, the activities in the communities will emphasize building and enhancing critical life skills for both the children and adults. The tailored responses seek to serve the unique needs of each community.

Towards these aims, their program will need to address community attitudes and behaviors. There are presently high levels of suspicion and fear, a weak culture of volunteerism, welfarism, and need for allowances. Affecting change across the districts, will require that both the MICAH and longer-term sponsorship approach carefully engage the community from the beginning. Leaders—including faith leaders—must be participants throughout the process. The literature from the WV Uganda office including the updated strategy documents, sponsorship feasibility study, and updated MICAH proposal that have informed these conclusions and will serve as the foundation for the future work in the region. Engaging all stakeholders will be necessary to achieve impact across the social and economic aspects of resilience that need to be built up across the region. Both the MICAH program and the longer-term sponsorship model will need to account for the community-based resilience and disaster mitigation as part of all development activities.

Ugandan Community Based Disaster Mitigation. Dedication to preparation is challenging, as it can be slow to motivate people in this direction. At the same time, putting measures into place to increase resilience is critical to lessening the impact of a crisis. Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRM) acknowledges that resilience depends on the capacity built in and around those most affected. Leadership through influence as supported by the EWV helps to drive capacity building across all levels of society from the top down and the bottom up. In Uganda, a plethora of organizations and individuals work hard to improve conditions for host communities and refugees. Despite sometimes competing agendas, they enjoy widespread collaboration. Leaders exert influence through vision. By aiding communities to fine-tune their worldview, these workers can focus on a vision that gives the communities collective influence and momentum. “Influence is about getting others to share your vision of a future state rather than pushing them towards that future state” (Olafsson 12 of 165).

Communities remain the most important actors in both disaster and developing contexts; the difference is in the process of engagement. The literature agrees that communities “remain the most important element in understanding how disaster risk and vulnerability are created and how it can be reduced because they are the ones most affected” (Niekerk 1). This shift towards more participatory disaster risk reduction, by placing communities at the center of research and program implementation, helps to minimize the effect of future shocks. Furthermore, it resonates with any formula for effective change—community ownership and investment. The reality is that DRR measures are easier to implement in a development context because they do not have to compete for resources and attention, or present contradictory messages.

There is an ever-present tension between relief and development. Each focus on different outcomes: relief focuses on immediate needs and life and death concerns; sustainable

development has a broader scope, including the quality of life beyond the present crisis. In a development context, the primary outcomes often focus on the sort of resiliency that will support a community during a disaster but at a time and space that allows bringing the community into the discussion in a productive way. In a disaster, organizing a response in this way is simply harder to do. Immediate needs and demands, understandably, dominate the focus and energy of responders. Historically, relief and development assistance strategies have been established separately and along parallel paths. Organizations are increasingly moving towards integration for greater impact and to minimize the harm that can result when either the immediate or the long-term needs are neglected.

Building Community Capacity and Fostering Disaster Resilience, describes key principles and recommendations for community-based interventions intended to build capacity and disaster resilience. The author promotes an ecological framework grounded in values such as: collaboration, social justice, empowerment, and an appreciation of diversity to guide disaster work with communities. The focus on community empowerment is set within a larger context of attention to improvements necessary beyond the community. Reviewing resources that look at the holistic approach to addressing disaster risks and recovery through empowerment is significant. Empowerment will always be a part of a larger approach, but the intention is to use this as a preliminary step to engage communities and prepare them to take on longer-term more sustainable changes at other levels (structural, economic, political, etc.).

Participatory assessments in a disaster context focus more on validating the real needs of the communities in question and identifying assets that can be immediately used in the situation. CBDRM, in a development context, follows the same general approach, but can be more detailed and comprehensive. It is future-focused and seeks out community connectors. We often overlook

connectors, in part because they are woven into every aspect of the community and evident in the normal activities of day to day life. They are the “local capacities for peace that maintain functional harmony among neighbors,” and they are the opportunities for empowering and strengthening communities amidst adversity (Wallace 28). By working to build the connectors from the first days in the community to the last, we enable the communities to address their own conflicts. From the moment we enter a community, even as first responders to a disaster event, we are setting the scene for what will ultimately transition to a recovery phase. The way we approach the relief activities prepares a foundation for the longer-term development activities that we hope to implement in communities. At the same time, our own attitudes that we communicate through our programs help set the stage for the future of development in fragile contexts. Do our activities and assumptions encourage positive mind-sets and our genuine confidence in the community’s capacities, or are we inadvertently undermining them? WVUS Program Manager Erica Van Deren warns that staff are often a central obstacle in building resilience. We have to address our internal behaviors and train our staff on EWV first. Working through this transition in Uganda requires we ask ourselves these difficult questions and experiment with new ideas that come from the community. As we engage with the community and build their confidence, we are in effect, building their capacity and overall resilience.

Intended Outcome: Resilient Communities

Fragility verses Vulnerability. As we seek to build resilience across the West Nile through new participatory approaches, it is essential to understand the factors impacting resiliency. This includes a deeper look at “fragility and “vulnerability”. Vulnerability relates directly to the members of the community. It examines how they are affected by poverty, abusive or violent relationships, discrimination, disaster risk, etc. There are some global indicators, but this term is

still highly context-specific. Local knowledge is critical to flushing out the sources of vulnerability and identifying all those who are affected.

Fragility is when the risks in a given context of community exceed the capacity to dealing with the risk. It refers to the environment in which the communities live, and it questions both stability and the government's ability and willingness to address basic needs. It examines the risk of conflict and other shocks. While some aspects of fragility are context-specific, established global indicators can address most of them. It is also important to understand that in relief and development work, there is a difference between working "in" fragility and working "on" fragility. The former relates to the environment in which we work and has to do with ways that we can remain operational within unstable contexts. The latter is speaking to the elements affecting fragility. This is the space impacted by EWV. As practitioners, we have to be concerned with both (Van Deren).

For the purposes of this discussion, the central WV concern should be vulnerability. It is easier to affect vulnerability factors than it is to affect fragility factors. Often, dynamics affecting fragility are closely related to higher political and economic forces outside of NGO's influence. WV has done significant work mapping the most fragile contexts and has determined a set of countries in which to expand our focus over the next several years. Through the mapping exercise, WV defined Uganda as a low-developing country, but the growing refugee situation in the West Nile region makes it a fragile context. As WV moves deeper into longer-term programming in harder places, it has much to learn about building resilience in under-developed regions prone to a variety of acute and chronic shocks.

Dependency is a key aspect of what makes people vulnerable to disasters. As Collins writes, "A lack of control over personal decision-making means that localized strengths in

avoiding underdevelopment and major crises are undermined” (65). He also explains that “the politics of humanitarian assistance leaves whole populations dependent on others and susceptible to further disaster and underdevelopment (21). Dependency, especially in unequal dependence relationships, can be dangerous. While mutual dependency can be a powerful force for good, it is difficult to execute. More often, even well-intentioned responses to both long-term development challenges and humanitarian crises succeed in creating unequal dependencies. This result is more pronounced in emergency settings where there are additional obstacles to development programming. The consequence is that the intended aid further perpetuates the vulnerability that feeds poverty and weakens the community’s resilience for surviving future disasters.

In Uganda’s West Nile region, the risk for disasters has increased alongside their degree of vulnerability. This area is experiencing a slow-onset or protracted disaster and a humanitarian emergency. The region’s local population was underdeveloped before the large influx of refugees came pouring across the border. Their presence is testing the already weak governmental systems and taxing the area’s limited resources. This effect is a reality worldwide for countries that are hosting large groups of refugees. The situation becomes more difficult when we consider the pre-existing needs of the affected host community. Collins warns that “an infusion of assistance can increase disparities between rich and poor and divisions between different ethnicities” (92), and this division is evident in Uganda. Here, the refugees have been settled among the host community with the promise of services and support. While the Ugandans were also guaranteed additional support, it has been difficult to implement that support because, of the two groups, the refugees are seen as more vulnerable than the hosts. On the other hand, the presence of the refugees diverts the pre-existing resources, and over time, as the refugee situation improves, the status of the host community will decline if neglected. It is a delicate balance, and

aid/development workers must constantly monitor how the unfolding consequences of the relief and development activities affect the tensions and other vulnerabilities.

The first phase of the response has brought a significant humanitarian assistance to the region, which gave a boost to the local community, compensating for the immediate strain brought on by the growing population. The problem with this situation, as with many HEA responses, is that the aid was not designed to stimulate sustainable development. As the agencies begin to cut back aid and the communities are unable to meet their basic needs on their own, tensions will rise and the communities' vulnerability will only have increased. This is the situation where we find ourselves now. A majority of the people in the West Nile region depend on aid agencies or the government for their survival. The crisis in South Sudan has resulted in a much more fragile context, where the individual and communal vulnerabilities have exacerbated. To reduce the vulnerability, agencies must shift to development-based programming that empowers the community to address its own political, social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities. This path is the only way to build resilience and strength in both the host and refugee communities.

Resilience. The popularity and diversity of the term “resilience” has expanded over recent years and today carries with it the many meanings and associations. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines resilience as “the ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens.” Posing the question—resilient to what?—helps to establish parameters for a discussion on resiliency. Determining the intensity and duration of impact helps to answer this question. Is the aversive circumstance acute or protracted? In 2008, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) launched their framework on resilience that brought this concept to the forefront for many organizations.

When we say something is resilient, it requires measurement. Even so, measurement is an allusive endeavor, and it remains easier to observe the effects of resilience than to define what makes a person resilient. Like intelligence or personality, resilience is a complex construct, and it may look different for people in various contexts. It may even change for people at different points in their lives. Much academic discussion has argued whether it is inherent or learned by individuals—a question of nature versus nurture. Responses from my coworkers support the notion that resilience is a learned behavior. Core to the concept of resilience are hope and optimism, meaning and purpose, a willingness to engage challenges, and a strong network of social support. EWV addresses these critical factors, allowing communities to strengthen these areas and build momentum for change.

Much of the literature on resilience outside the humanitarian sphere focuses on iterative processes that foster a strong, optimistic belief in personal ability or self-efficacy, that help boost peoples' capacity to adapt to the challenges of aversive circumstances (Bonanno, Romero, and Klien 151). These conclusions around optimism and belief in self translates to a community. Through their research, they found that “[t]he most commonly evoked predictor of community resilience is social capital” (Bonanno, Romero, and Klein 154). There is a gap in research around community resilience, so much of the results from individual studies must be inferred to apply to larger groups. Another constraint is that most research uses self-reporting questionnaires as the central source of data. A difficulty with understanding resiliency is the lack of a baseline on it from before the onset of an emergency event. For this reason, assessing preparedness and ongoing indicators of resilience is increasingly important as slow-onset disasters begin to unfold.

In an article “People Can Be Resilient, But Can Communities?”, the author builds on the work done by Bonanno, Romero, and Klein, asking “whether we can measure—and perhaps

facilitate—the psychological resilience of communities, buffering them against the adverse effects of traumatic stressors” (McNally 197). Is the community merely the sum of its parts (individual members), or is it distinctive with its own emergent characteristics? McNally claims it is the latter and examines two fallacies that follow from applying a part-whole mind-set with regards to resiliency. The first fallacy occurs when we incorrectly apply characteristics of the whole to its parts. The other fallacy results when we assume that what applies to the part(s) applies to the whole. An example of this fallacy is illustrated in Hardin’s (1968) “tragedy of commons.” McNally explains that “a farmer greatly benefits by grazing his cattle in the commons of a rural community, but if every farmer does likewise, the soil is ruined and everyone is worse off than before. What is good for the individual can be bad for the group” (McNally 197). He argues that the opposite can occur as well, and his example is the invisible hand of capitalism. Pursuit of individual selfish interests can benefit the society.

He asks whether “extrapolating the concept of resilience to communities is sensible or fruitful” (McNally, 197), and reminds us that “[c]ommunities as nonsentient entities, cannot literally possess psychological resilience” (McNally 198). Interestingly, we use this language to describe a community when it has the resources to withstand and recover from adversity. He concludes that if we can define it and measure it, then we can facilitate it. This fact reminds us not to ignore other things happening in the community that affect the resiliency and that may be more realistic outcomes for a development program.

In *Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis: USAID Policy and Program Guidance*, USAID defines resilience as “the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth” (2012). Shocks, as illustrated by this

definition, can refer to a number of factors that stress the capacities of a community. Often, these shocks are linked to, or exacerbated by poverty. Consequently, any discussion about these shocks should consider capital or capacities that the communities possess before, during, and after having experienced these “shocks.”

Economic shocks can include the loss of employment for the primary wage earner, the failure of an agricultural crop, volatile process for agricultural inputs, and any other events that affect a household’s ability to earn income. These often contribute to prolonged states of crisis and are an essential aspect to address for longer-term development. Proactively programming with potential economic shocks in mind can help mitigate the damage of eminent future shocks that are beyond a community’s control such as those caused by climate events or political and social conflict.

Social shocks consist of cultural practices or events that break down social networks. Of all the forms of capital, Collins argues that social capital is the most important. Alternatively, social capital has the potential to increase the ability of communities, households, and individuals in those communities to cope and even prosper. Health shocks are often neglected in the literature, but they can have a significant impact at the individual and household level. These events compound economic hardship and are often a central cause, forcing families below the poverty line in a range of contexts.

Environmental shocks involve droughts, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, mudslides, and any other climate-related events that further erode communities’ coping abilities. As environments are stressed and resources become increasingly scarce, conflict between individuals and across communities rises. For people living the daily struggle for survival, this state of heightened stress weakens and threatens the community bonds needed to build resilience

capacities. Environmental degradation has already begun to happen in the West Nile region. Deforestation, caused by the establishment of settlements and scavenging firewood, has ravaged the habitat. Tensions over access to firewood and other resources is exacerbating the tensions between host and refugee villagers.

Conflict is an important shock that has numerous impacts on resiliency at all levels. Ethnic conflicts are at the heart of most of the displacement in this region and the rest of Africa as well. The conflicts outside of Uganda also have an impact on the West Nile region, and aid organizations are further stressed by the conflict's emergency demands. This concern needs constant surveillance, as the area is uniquely affected by several other regional conflicts that continue to unfold.

The factors affecting resilience, then, fall under three categories: meeting basic needs, ownership of assets, and access to external resources (USAID). All stakeholders—from those at the lowest community levels to those at the national level—have a part to play in addressing each of these categories. For example, global agreements, national laws, and local farming practices can each affect environmental risk concerns.

Resilience verses Sustainability. Sustainability refers to the ability to sustain a status quo, while resilience is the ability to recover quickly from shocks to the status quo. Ideally, we want resilience that is sustainable, and *sustainable development* is possible only when the people and communities possess a certain level of resilience. They are interrelated, but must not be confused. Ugandans and South Sudanese are living through a protracted crisis, and though life is improving day by day, it is a delicate process. They are rebuilding their lives; however, the threat to plunge back into uncertainty and despair are ever-present. Achieving sustainability guards

against this threat, assuring “long lasting development in which reasonable economic prosperity, environmental quality and social equality [is] achieved in a balanced way” (Keunkel 23).

Adaptive Development: Literature that Informs Pertinent Development Action in East Africa

Characteristics of a Resilient Community.

Ending extreme poverty, therefore, requires building resilience capacities to ensure that people live out of extreme poverty, not only today, but also in the future. This also means that poverty reduction efforts should not just prevent impoverishment but, in addition ensure, that households are on sustained and resilient pathways out of poverty. (USAID 3)

Ultimately building “resilience” should address these dynamics and shift the focus from preparing for and responding to shocks to meet basic needs, to establishing the capacity to meet longer-term objectives in the face of stressors. Resilience can be absorptive, adaptive, and transformative, but the overriding aim is to reduce costs of recurrent crises, including the unsustainable costs of responding to large-scale humanitarian emergencies in the same places every few years.

In the 1990s, a new paradigm of bottom-up development strategies emerged. The challenge, as Collins puts it, is that “participating does not necessarily mean being in control. What is really required is participation that comes from empowerment” (Collins 76). The way to encourage resilient communities is to build capacity for individuals, households and communities to create change in their own circumstances. This “empowerment” comes from first breaking down oppressive and negative worldviews and pre-conceived notions of capacity. By embracing an assets or strengths-based approach, communities learn to uncover the ways in which they are already resilient and identify gaps they need to address. As previously discussed,

resiliency is multi-faceted, and translating this to the community level in a practical way is necessary for a comprehensive assessment.

A resilient community includes “the capacity or ability of [a community] to anticipate, prepare for and respond to, and recover quickly from impacts of disaster” (Mayunga), or “the ability of a system, community or society to resist, absorb, cope with and recover from the effects of hazards” (IFRC 22). These definitions are extensions of the broader definition and provide the focus for our discussion about the West Nile refugee response. A safe and resilient community is knowledgeable and healthy; it possesses the capacity to assess, manage, and monitor its risks. Such a community can learn new skills and build on past experiences. Its leaders and community groups are organized and connected, able to identify problems, establish priorities, and act in unified ways. In such a community are often robust relationships with external actors who provide wider supportive environment and who supply goods and services when needed. Other external factors include sound infrastructure and, to a degree, economic opportunities. Natural resources are responsibly managed and accessible. This picture of community resilience requires the community working in concert.

Do the host community and refugees possess the capacity to assess their situation, identify shocks and stresses, and devise appropriate responses in an ongoing manner? No answer is complete without intentional and meaningful community participation. Additionally, do the communities have access to resources they need and the capacity to implement integrated plans that will ultimately reduce their risk? Experts agree that the more environmental, social, and economic assets people have, the less they will feel the impact of disasters. When immediate survival is the central focus, the prioritized list may change. The challenge remains that if

communities have any hope of transitioning out of a state of disaster relief and onto a trajectory of sustainable development, they must have the strength and know how to do so.

Substantive gaps remain in programming options for fragile contexts. Many organizations are exploring alternative approaches that replace short-term responses with mid-term to longer-term program designs. This shift focuses on root causes of the poverty and the conflict common in unstable environments. In addition to the obvious challenges to working in fragile contexts, other obstacles related to donor interest and donor funding add new layers of complexity. Funding is difficult because most time-frames for humanitarian response projects is short-term. Most institutional donors focus on shorter term grants for rapid onset emergencies, instead of on chronic complex humanitarian contexts. Interruptions in funding make it difficult to design and implement integrated and holistic funding. While no one solution answers the many challenges for building community resilience, empowerment offers the best hope to achieve both immediate and longer-term results for the most vulnerable. Even the study of unstable contexts remains an on-going challenge, but one that we must tackle if we are to learn and gather best practices. Within the humanitarian sphere is an emerging interest and focus in this area, but no substantive body of knowledge on the subject. It is a moving target, and the learnings, much like the approach, is adapting and evolving.

Adaptive Development in Literature. Defining fragility, vulnerability, and resilience provides a starting point from which we can begin to look through the lens of Adaptive Development—a new approach to the space between relief and development programming. World Vision International’s (WVI) Disaster Management Team published a report in 2017 summarizing the lessons learned from case studies across ten fragile-conflicted affected countries, including Uganda and South Sudan. An overall finding is that approaches in this area still require contextualization, continual learning, adaptation, and revision. It highlights the importance of developing deep relationship within the community, while fostering

transparency, participation and accountability to ensure response appropriateness and community buy-in. Increasingly, “[h]umanitarian actors are challenged to find more adaptive and resilient approaches that can be sustained beyond the traditional parameters of humanitarian response to specifically address vulnerabilities to violence and reduce the impact of conflict on children [and families]” (Learning Report 3).

In *A Review of the Area Rehabilitation Program (ARP) Model*, WV explores a new programming approach for fragile contexts. I reviewed the document with a particular focus on areas where the model could be strengthened by the EWV model. The ARP model was first developed by World Vision United Kingdom to address programming gaps in fragile contexts. It seeks to replace a shorter-term project approach with a mid-term integrated program design that focuses on the root causes of poverty and conflict. The paper confronts challenges and opportunities for WVUS to engage with the model. The findings show that one of the greatest issues with this model is the fundraising. This report illustrates the many ways that organization around the world are changing their approach to complex development issues.

The development and relief spheres are evolving and integrating in new ways. This is a positive development and provides an opportunity to learn from and build on the examples of past programming described previously. The path before us represents an opportunity to reframe our approach and put people at the center of their own development in new ways—beginning with the where they see themselves in their own story and the greater narrative of God. This is a moment for us to “empower” them to transform their worldview.

PART II: THE PATH TO EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is contagious. WVUS’s Erica Van Deren called it “the secret sauce of EWV and the key to resilience that nobody talks about”. Being empowered means accessing the unique

God-given potential inherent in all human beings. In *Collective Leadership*, author Petra Kuenkel asserts that “[d]iscouragement reduces our potential, our strength, and our contribution. Again, we need to change our mind-set; self-empowering is not only okay, but important. When we have developed trust in our ability to make a difference, we need to claim the power to do so” (89). This transformation needs to happen at the individual, household, community, and national level if our hopes to achieve substantive and sustainable positive change in the most difficult places is to be realized.

Wikipedia refers to empowerment as measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority. Keunkel goes further to say that empowerment allows for healing and positive movement forward: “[n]aming injustice is absolutely critical, but being locked in a feeling of victimization takes our life force away” (Kuenkel 89).

An empowered world view is more than positive thinking. It acknowledges that people have a foundation of belief and practices that inform their behavior. By influencing these underlying principles, small substantive changes can pave the way for future transformation. It is also more than a religious notion; it is backed up by other disciplines such as the social sciences and business. Additionally, secular academics have supported this same idea, though referenced by different names such as self-efficacy. In *Creative Confidence*, authors David and Tom Kelley acknowledge empowerment with their observation that the “perception of their own abilities as permanently limited can become a self-fulfilling hypothesis.” They also note that “[a] creative mind-set can be a powerful force for looking beyond the status quo” (18). Because world view is so pervasive and colors all aspects of our experience, it is essential to leverage this

these core thoughts and beliefs so that communities can both see and change the “whole” picture of poverty. A holistic view of poverty reveals that true empowerment entails a new vision.

Author Kate Willis mentions the various dimensions of power that are integral to understanding “empowerment.” They include the power over, power to, power with, and power within. For meaningful change, communities must leverage all of these forms of power. Willis further affirms that an effective program will “set up conditions within which individual and groups can empower themselves” (113). Frequently throughout the literature on development principles, commentators have noted the effect that this trait can have. Kelley and Kelley claim that “people with self-efficacy set their sights higher, try harder, persevere longer, and show more resilience in the face of failure” (25).

The Empowered World View Model

World Vision’s Faith and Development team defines Empowered World View as “an enabling approach for individual and community transformation of beliefs, mindset, and behaviors which affirm their identity, dignity, and agency to participate effectively in sustainable transformative change” (Muvengi). The purpose of EWV is to organize and empower individuals, households, farmer groups and communities to leverage their gifts, talents, knowledge, resources, and capacities (spiritual, social, physical, and economic), to break dependence and enable them to become active agents of their own change. The methodology is consistent with findings that have determined local capacity to be at the core of sustainability and “[m]any of the dilemmas of development work in terms of participation, empowerment, and the nature of intervention in development come down to whether there is sound communication with and facilitation of local capacity” (Collins 76). As Pastor Tobias from Kenya tells us, the EWV training “ ‘starts with understanding your identity—who you are and what God created you to do’ I came to realize

that, first and foremost, I am a child of God, created in His image for good. And second, that I am here to be a steward and to be productive. So I came to know who I am” (qtd. in Muvengi 12).

The initial application of EWV focuses on livelihoods development such as moving farmers from a mindset of dependency and subsistence towards belief in their ability to change the world around them. Here is the process through the words of Tony Okoth, a Kenyan farmer:

At the training I learned about modern farming technologies and improved breeds. I was told, “You are created in God’s image and likeness.” And that is a very big privilege. So when I left I said, “God can’t create me in His own image and likeness and expect me to be poor. If I am now a tool of God, what can I do? I have a responsibility. I come from a community. What can I give back to that community? What can I do that will change our lives?” It started with just nine people doing rabbit farming. But in the last year, through the farm and youth group, we have directly touched the lives of more than 300 people and our number just keeps growing because now people can see that I wasn’t just talking. This thing works. The young people are no longer idle. They’re employed and engaged. They’re standing on their own two feet, taking care of their families and passing on what they’ve learned to others. (qtd.in Muvengi 16)

Though EWV’s first success have come from area programs in higher developing countries, I believe its applications are much broader; that they can work in multiple sectors and for a variety of contexts, including those made fragile by conflict or disaster. WVUS Program Manager, Erica Van Deren, explains EWV along with other models such as Channels of Hope are based on the same theory of change—that mindsets, worldviews, and beliefs affect behavior and are important for holistic transformation.

The first block in the EWV foundation is Scripture Reflection. EWV is grounded on sound study of God’s word, a powerful tool for transformation. As Father Robert Mackenzie realized through the training, “If you can deliver a message to people that invokes the word of God and helps them understand why they were created and what God expects of them, they can graduate from the traditional beliefs that hinder the development of their lives” (qtd. in Muvengi 31). By starting with the authority of the Bible or other religious doctrine, communities can begin to put principles into practice with renewed confidence.

Second, the approach is Asset-Based (local assets), focused on discovering and celebrating what is already there and what God is already doing. This acknowledges that resources are not the central issue. In Tanzania, where EVW was developed, WV Faith and Development Director, Tim Andrews believed that WV could operate APs with little to no funding. In this context, there were sufficient natural resources and wide-spread government penetration—all they needed was empowerment, visioning and business planning support (Van Deren). This is a bold statement and though not necessarily applicable to fragile contexts, it speaks to the power of changing mindsets. Rachel Joseph, from Tanzania, shared that

The most important shift for all of us is in our mindset. We have moved away from the old, which is ignorance, to embrace new ideas, new technologies, new practices and new ways of doing things... We were doing things the same way we had always done them, which was the same way our parents had always done them. We had the resources we needed to change our lives, but we didn’t see the opportunities. (qtd. in Muvengi 19)

Next, EWV builds communities from the “inside out,” by being present with others. It starts with the smallest levels of interactions with neighbors and helps to grow local networks and associations that, in time, discover power to make change happen through acting together.

The model is relationship-driven and seeks to connect people and gifts to drive local change. Above all, the transforming themes include identity, vision, compassion, relationships, and faith in action. The EVW cycle begins with community visioning, which moves to community group mobilization, then action planning, and finally evaluation and revision. It is an ongoing cycle that may be iterated multiple times. There are sector specific applications for EVW models, and the most prominent one focuses on livelihood development.

Of the many benefits to the approach, first is that it supports holistic change. It provides an avenue for transforming society mentally, spiritually, and economically as well as socially—as it interrogates existing mind-sets, beliefs, practices, structures, and systems in light of development. Second, it affirms locally available resources and challenges groups to use them for their own gain. Third, it enhances local participation and emboldens individuals to take part in changing prevailing situations. Fourth, it encourages communities to break the dependence syndrome, or cycle, that is prevalent throughout so many communities and build's people's capacity to drive change instead of waiting for external aid. Finally, communities are open to new ways of living and are encouraged to become agents of their own change. Kenyan Livelihoods Program Coordinator Alice Yugi, puts it this way: “[w]hen your heart is transformed, you have a drive that comes from within. Your attitudes are transformed, your actions are transformed and you do things in a new way” (qtd. in Muvengi 36).

The EVW approach measures community change at four levels. The first focuses on the character of the community to develop maturity, compassion and responsibility. Next on the trajectory, is wealth creation and profitable enterprises to break dependence. After the momentum has built and the community is feeling more independent, it is time to shift to social accountability. Finally, the member relationships are transformed with a commitment to serving

the community. This data is collected through pre and post-workshop surveys that assess knowledge gains in the participants.

Breaking the Chains of Poverty with Empowered World View is an internal WV report that documents the stories of multiple people across East Africa, whose lives have been transformed through the application of EWW principles. The report acknowledges that social change is needed to encourage adoption and ownership of new behaviors to solve development challenges. The idea is that EWW mobilizes social and spiritual capital necessary to achieve sustainable development goals. People cannot unlock their potential until they see themselves as valued and capable. EWW speaks to and transforms people's core beliefs to change the worldview of the individual and community. They are guided to discover the value in their identity, nurture relationships within their family and community, and cast a new vision for their future. This source helps to articulate the rationale for the approach and qualitative success that has been achieved across East Africa. These learnings will be useful as we make the case for adapting this approach to the West Nile Response. The report contains stories from people whose lives have been transformed through this approach. They are the voices of Africans speaking to other Africans and others around the world needing to hear they too are unique image-bearers of God.

EWV and Enterprise

Social enterprise excels by maximizing the number of learning cycles—quick wins and quick failures. Changing worldviews and affecting change at the community level is no different. We must always be conscientious of the risks that individuals and communities take, but with each small win, momentum builds, and a new vision begins to emerge. Creative confidence deals with innovation that looks forward. How can we improve on the small successes we have achieved?

EWV teaches that God's plan for the community is one of success and provision for each person's family. It creates an environment where risk taking and exploring innovative ideas is encouraged by God. Within fragile contexts, this methodology is not only necessary for progress, but for basic survival. How can refugees and host communities leverage their assets and abilities to solve the problems around them?

Sustainable transformation requires getting to the core of peoples' motivations and beliefs. Many development interventions fail because they don't affect change at the individual level. Not only is addressing the human component essential for ultimate success, but it is also the place where the greatest opportunities lie. This process requires a growth mindset and design thinking. Design Thinking employs "a step-by-step progression to help people discover and experience the tools and methodologies of design thinking, gradually increasing the level of challenge to help individuals transcend the fear of failure that blocks their best ideas. These small successes are intrinsically rewarding and help people to go on to the next level" (Kelley and Kelley 43).

Design Thinking can easily lead to Creative Confidence, a concept ripe with connections to EWV. It acknowledges what so many other development specialists have realized which is that "[w]e just need to help people rediscover what they already have: the capacity to imagine—or build upon—new-to -the-world ideas" (Kelley and Kelley 5). People who have creative confidence make better choices set off more easily in new directions and are better able to find solutions and collaborate with others to improve the situations around them. They are more flexible, adaptable, and resilient. Embracing creative confidence happens as part of the EWV model. The concept of "Guided Mastery" also applies. This term refers to first-hand experiences used to remove false beliefs (Kelley and Kelley 39). It is at the core of the EWV experience.

Literature of Empowerment and Social Cohesion

As previously mentioned, many sources have reiterated the impact of empowerment on social cohesion and other indicators for resilience and positive development. One such expert is renowned psychologist Albert Bandura, who has done extensive research on self-efficacy and its connection to human agency. Historically, human agency is considered only at the individual level, but people do not manage adversity alone; they do so in community. Bandura's work on human agency and collective efficacy shines light on the importance of the collective unit and experience. Agency can happen in three ways – individually, by proxy, and collectively. When people are in circumstances where they have little or no direct control over their environment – social conditions and institutional practices (as is the case for the most vulnerable), they have to exert agency by proxy. Shifting worldviews and bringing communities together to bolden their collective vision and voice, however, moves agency out of the realm of “proxy” and into more substantive space. The need to unite communities is increasingly important, especially as many are fragmented by cultural differences such as tribes and language.

This “unity” can be most difficult in regions such as the West Nile, where the numerous ethnicities and cultures converge, the negative effects of ethnocentrism become obvious. This potential obstacle is also evident in the literature on the topic. In “Ethnocentrism and the Value of Human Life,” the authors examine the framework underlying how we approach valuing human life, and they conclude that ethnocentrism strongly influences the valuation process in a variety of contexts. The article examines many dynamics including the interaction between ingroups and outgroups. In an article about *Ethnocentrism and the Value of a Human Life*, authors Felicia Pratto and Demis Glasford note that “[a]s with prejudiced attitudes and resource discrimination, categorizing others as belonging to outgroups rather than to ingroups increases

the likelihood that others are dehumanized” (Pratto and Glasford, par.5). Those that are not “of” us are “outside” of and thus, alien to us. When a situation of conflict (war) or competition (possibly economic) occurs, we more naturally feel compelled to support our own. In this case and in others, viewing others as less-than happens both sub-consciously and in more intentional ways. The authors suggest that the answers to two questions can predict how people come to value others’ lives. The first question, “Is the life in question included in my scope of moral concern?,” implies that we assign more value to those who are part of the ingroup. The second question follows, “[d]oes the life in question compete with the interests of others in my scope of concern?” (Pratto and Glasford, par. 79). This question gets at the level of competition and speaks to a survivalist mentality. It is also an essential consideration when engaging various community stakeholders in the process of challenging their own worldviews.

In context of worldview, tribalism, or the creation of sub-groupings, is at the center of many community problems. The answer to this concern is to instill in tribe members a sense of belonging to the larger human family. Creating a more inclusive community means a move away from strong tribal or cultural ties, which can happen when groups come together to discover their common ground and build relationships that they can later leverage for development activities. The circle is widened, bringing in other tribes. This process also provides the time to consider their cultural components that, on the surface, may be more difficult to comprehend. By exposing themselves to potential differences, they have time and a safe space to process them. The training may help to curb certain learned responses that otherwise would happen innately. Growing a tribe requires humility and an open mind. It does not mean that communities have to embrace all aspects of another culture, but learn to see and value that EWV give and take experience goes a long way.

All development processes are part of a greater “tribal” story. As Meyers suggests, we have to identify our own story and all the other ones that are competing for dominance. Meyers explains that the entire human story is told in the Christian narrative of creation, incarnation, and redemption. EWV seeks to leverage this core principle as a starting point for reorienting existing worldviews towards more positive and productive ends. Meyers also focuses on the broken relationships at the heart of many development challenges. This is another area where true development requires reconciliation of these relationships. Ultimately, all people’s individual decisions matter. As the authors Kelley and Kelley remind us, “Everything in modern society is the result of a collection of decisions made by someone.” (32). These decisions made in concert by the community are even more significant.

From the lessons on adaptive development from WVI, we have learned “programmes that address the conflict drivers can immediately improve the humanitarian response and dramatically reduce the need for ongoing humanitarian assistance, mitigate protection and risks and create conditions under which short-term humanitarian programming can have longer-term impact” (Learning Report 1). This is further elaborated on as WV explores the idea that “protection and social cohesion should operate concurrently, thereby ensuring dignified and meaningful access to immediate humanitarian assistance, while at the same time addressing the root causes of conflict and potential triggers” (Learning Report 2). Activities that improve social cohesion strengthen the entire community and effect all interventions. It is obvious that “[c]hild-specific interventions are chronically under-resourced... Adolescents and youth are often mistrusted and neglected when prioritizing humanitarian interventions, despite being critical players in the trajectory towards or towards further conflict” (Learning Report 2). These critical interventions that help to shape children, who will become leaders in the community, have to be a priority.

Empowering Children as Peacebuilders (ECaP) is a model that acknowledges the importance of youth engagement and seeks to train children as group leaders and facilitators to strengthen social cohesion in communities. Staff implementing the model have found that “[i]n Uganda, the ECaP model enhanced peacebuilding, participation, and the psychosocial well-being of children. This resulted in reduced levels of fighting amongst children from different refugee communities and between children from refugee and host communities” (Learning Report 8). This approach is aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which prioritizes bringing humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors into greater complementarity. The need to bring multiple stakeholders together is one of the central arguments for leveraging faith leaders and core religious doctrines in relief and development programming.

EWV: Where Religion and Development Meet

Community members across East Africa have come to the conclusion that solutions to problems of poverty must address the holistic nature of poverty and utilize the strengths of religious organizations and movements to promote positive change. Senior Chief Yobe Jolom Mpanang’ombre from Malawi claims “In the past, NGOs and other organizations have not specifically targeted faith leaders. But they forget that these communities are in the hands of the churches. So when World Vision invited the pastors from each community to attend the Empowered Worldview training, they were reaching out to everyone” (qtd. in Muvengi 60).

Faith-based NGOs and approaches that acknowledge the faith of the communities where we work are necessary for preserving the humanitarian imperative and responding to the needs of the most vulnerable people around the world. The universal humanitarian principles expanded upon in the IFRC Humanitarian Charter were first embodied and progressed by religious

institutions that have historically been a driving force for humanitarian action. Any approach that would exclude the influence and impact of faith would be a misrepresentation of the people being served and result in an incomplete response.

The last hundred years has seen an increase in the number of secular humanitarian agencies, and this increase has raised questions about the place of Faith Based Organizations (FBO) in the evolving humanitarian partnership. FBOs, however, have certain comparative advantages when engaging with humanitarian crises. The human response to disaster is a holistic experience and includes a spiritual dynamic. Without organizations that understand this union and that are equipped to inhabit this space in a response, relief efforts would be incomplete. Engaging with faith leaders contributes to the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions, especially in fragile contexts. West Nile staff attest that “because faith leaders often are so deeply woven into the fabric of the community, engaging and partnering with local faith actors in humanitarian responses can generate local ownership, ensure responses are appropriate to their context and strengthen accountability to local populations” (Learning Report 10). Partnership with faith leaders requires navigating various dynamics and understanding diverse faith perspectives.

EWV engages a humanizing process through which we learn to relate. It starts with the expectation that we will find common ground before we ever enter into a new space. We need to genuinely believe that we have something to learn and that God has placed something important for us to discover, even amidst people who believe and live completely different from us. Religion is not only useful for the doctrinal principles that serve as a foundation for development, but it is also presents an opportunity to connect. Myers tells us that “[f]orecasts suggest that Christianity and Islam will make up two thirds of the world population by 2100”

(204). This means that understanding Islam and our Muslim brothers and sisters is essential. The West Nile region is home to a blend of Christianity and Islam along with other tribal beliefs.

By addressing the core elements of the popular religion through thoughtful curriculum, communities also can better deal with harmful aspects of culture or tradition that are mixed into common religious practice. It is important to remember that a central value of the EWV approach is to create a space to challenge destructive attitudes and behaviors. First, we need to identify where the edges meet. There are many similarities between the major world religions, which means that Christianity and Islam have common ground that can be foundational for a variety of development approaches. Partnering with faith communities is a growing area of work for WV and religious networks and leadership. Partnering with Muslim religious leaders not only communicates the respect we have for their beliefs and traditions, but it also is the most practical, effective way to motivate the community to action. If religious channels promote extremism, it is vital also to promote models of moderation and cooperation.

Sheikh Dini Rashidi Kimweri is one of a group of faith leaders in Tanzania that experienced the transformation of EWV and leveraged his learning across his community to build peace. As he recounts, “[e]mpowered Worldview made me realize that regardless of the differences in affiliation, we are similar; that regardless of the differences in our beliefs we can work together for the development of the whole community” (qtd. in Muvengi 20). He goes on to describe his experience further:

In fact, this training has taken us to the point where I am now an ambassador for the Christians to the Muslim community. I tell my people that Christians are good, that we can sit together and eat together and take part in ceremonies together. And now this is what is happening in our community. Previously the relationship between Christians and

Muslims in this community was difficult. There was no way we could sit here together like this. The people on each side wanted to say, “I’m better than you.” And when we heard the other side talking, we would say, “They’re talking foolishness.” Now we know we were blind. I must admit it felt a little strange being invited to attend a training by a Christian organization. But I know that when God calls, you cannot refuse. As I sat down at the Empowered Worldview training I remembered the Quran, where it talks about angels who received knowledge from God, and I thought I should take this as my example. I should stay and learn something, because if God is offering knowledge, we should receive it. As the training went on, I realized that it was a good thing. It was not changing my faith in any way, it was just washing away the bad knowledge and wrong interpretations I had. The four of us were together at the training, and after we came back, we continued talking together and eating together. The people in our community wondered what was going on. It was something new. (qtd. in Muvengi 20)

Beyond collaboration with Imams and other respected community members, the organization and the programs must be seen and accepted as local and not foreign. In an article “American Evangelicals: A Gospel of Modernity,” the authors explain that increasingly, corporations and international non-governmental organizations (INGO) are “rooted in multiculturalism, one that focuses on sensitivity to local cultures” (Lechner and Boli 441). WV’s president is cited in the very same article, speaking about the organization’s structure as intentionally both global and local. It has to be rooted in the community if the community and other actors—including the government—will trust it. Faith leaders are part of larger community networks that touch the lives of people across the socio-economic spectrum.

Finally, to promote an environment of change and reduce the likelihood of extremism, we need to focus on changing the patterns of behavior in the younger generations. It is much easier to shape young people because they tend to be more open. By focusing on interventions that promote peace, encourage youth to find their voice, and support diverse relationships, we discourage extreme ideology from taking root. This sentiment was echoed by WV staff interviewed in Arua. This approach has successfully improved relationships between groups that have suffered historical conflict and violence. I saw immediate relevance concerning the refugee response in Northern Uganda with South Sudanese refugees. There are ongoing problems between the majority tribe – Dinka and many other South Sudanese tribes, primarily the Nuer. Though both of these groups have had to flee their home, they continue to face many challenges living together in close proximity. One of the ways we are trying to improve this situation in the long-term is through Youth Peace Clubs. When children grow up having friends from a variety of tribes, it is much more difficult for them and their families to see them as outsiders and “others.”

EWV seeks to address each of these integral aspects. Connecting with one another’s humanity is central to improving our world and using spirituality as the bridge by which we can relate to one another is transformative. Author Daniel Groody defines spirituality, explaining, “How human life takes shape...it probes who we are, what we value, how we interact, why we are here on earth and ultimately where we are going as individuals and a human community” (23). Leveraging our spiritual identity reconnects us to our humanity. When we do not see the value in other people, it is easier to ignore them, and in the worst circumstances, harm them. As soon as we begin to understand our similarities and care about one another, that is when the world changes—and for the better.

EWV Development in East Africa

The successful application of this model throughout the East Africa region will serve as the basis for expanding into the refugee response. EWV has been integrated into the sponsorship-based programming for all East Africa countries, but still remains absent from response areas such as in the WNRR. One of the most powerful examples of EWV in action is the impact that it has had in areas once dominated and oppressed by superstition and harmful practices. Father Robert Mackenzie is the leader of the Kayoyo Anglican Parish in Mpanang'ombe Village, Nthondo in Malawi. He notes:

One of the biggest mindset challenges we face in this community is the belief in witchcraft. It is very serious to talk about it, very risky. But it is a big problem here. For example, we struggle to buy sugar and other items because there is nobody who will establish a grocery store that has the capacity to carry everything we need to buy. The belief is that if you are better off, someone will use witchcraft to kill you. So everybody tries to stay on the same level as everyone else. (qtd. in Muvengi 31)

Merina Phiri, from another village in Malawi, admitted that “there’s a belief around here that if you have good things—a brick house, iron sheets for your roof, electricity, nice furniture—others may bewitch you. So even if you have money, you don’t attract people’s attention by showing your wealth. You hide it” (qtd. in Muvengi 27). Merina learned that by changing her mindset, this impacted her decisions, which ultimately transformed her circumstances. There are many such stories of people across East Africa, experiencing the transformational message of EWV.

A presentation on EWV in Burundi, provides an overview of the EWV approach as it relates to a neighboring country. There is much to learn from how EWV has been incorporated into other East African contexts. Though this is not considered a fragile context, it is still

applicable to Uganda. As part of the empowerment activities, EWV organizes and mobilizes households and communities to break dependence and become agents for their own change. It combines scripture, relationship building and an assets-based approach to build communities up from the inside out. This presentation describes the core areas of the model, community change outcomes and roll-out plan.

In Kenya, pastor Tobias Onyango recounts “I had believed somebody from somewhere would come and help me, that church people are poor people, and that God would save me by sending an angel. And children—including my own children—were suffering as a result” (qtd. in Muvengi 12). Through his own experience of EWV training, pastor Tobias now has a different outlook. Moreover, he is working to break down the false ideas about poverty within his own community, using the power of the biblical narrative.

PART III: APPLICATION OF THE EWV IN THE WEST NILE RESPONSE

Challenges, Opportunities and the Way Forward

Findings from research in the West Nile context has helped to frame the challenges that must be overcome if the refugees and host communities are to reach a more sustainable state of development. Of the 56 fragile contexts identified by USAID, WV is working in 39 of them, 20 of which are long-term APs. These are sponsorship funded, 15-year, multi-sectoral community development programs, often integrated into institutional and private grant funding. This position presents a unique opportunity for WV to be a leader in this space, and leadership is sorely needed. The past ten years has seen an increase in the scale and duration of conflicts and has resulted in unprecedented humanitarian need and contextual complexity.

Moving forward, the West Nile region needs to access new and innovative project models and principles to support its transition from a relief to development space. As the West Nile staff design their transition, they should apply the lessons learned from other countries throughout the East Africa region. Tanzania and Burundi can serve as case studies for Uganda in the application of the approach. As a first step, the WNRR staff can participate in an EWV training led by the regional office. From there, the staff should request an EWV workshop be held in Arua and rolled out to the other districts and program areas. A general plan to accomplish this has been written into the MICAH program proposal, but the details are yet to be defined. I will be partnering with the office to ensure this is flushed out for maximum participation and results. With this renewed focus, Uganda and the partnership will be better equipped to face the evolving realities of relief and development as we embrace EWV and integrate it into other models.

The first concern to deal with is the fragmented, current approach to fragile contexts within WV and beyond in the greater humanitarian sphere. There is much to learn in this space and not enough evidence to have established best practices. More work needs to be done to assess the success of other pilots beyond East Africa to draw global conclusions that can be leveraged in new ways. Though we lack data as is to be expected at this stage, we must focus on collecting and growing these experiences into a body of proof. Area program measurements have recently been established across EWV indicators and responders should adapt them to their West Nile response. Part of taking this to scale will be prioritizing funding to invest in the research and gathering the evidence of impact. Evidence is important not only for sound program design but also as a critical fundraising component. Increasingly, institutional and private, large and small-scale donors are demanding proof of impact. We need greater resources invested to market this model across the partnership and to donors. Essentially, the entire industry must look at doing

development differently, and we now have an opportunity for countries and regions to speak into the new way forward.

A central internal challenge for the EWV model remains that it is not universally understood or valued. This has slowed the organization's adoption of the approach. As Program Manager Erica Van Deren explained, "many within WV still don't get it". Internally, people still think that poverty is about giving and getting material things. This underlying attitude is more than a matter of education; changing it requires a paradigm shift. There is power in "giving things out, and shifting this dynamic means upsetting the present balance of power" (Van Deren). Resistance will occur at many levels as individuals and organizations are reluctant to give up their individual and corporate positions and influence. Consequently, it is necessary to think about how a wide-spread adoption of EWV would challenge organizational and national power dynamics as it is integrated into any program design.

Finally, more work needs to be done to further test the EWV inter-faith adaptations. Over the next four decades, Islam will grow faster than any other religion, and the initial application of the Islam adaptation is less conclusive. Second, this priority must hold for both organizations and communities, as reflected by design and funding decisions. We must remind donors as Myers reminds us that "[e]conomic growth does not happen if people in large enough numbers are not willing (or unable) to work, save, innovate, and become more productive" (51). The standard approach is not sufficient, and it is time to take a closer look at the fundamental way we are engaging with communities.

CONCLUSION

In Breaking the Chains, Daniel Muvengi explains that

Empowered worldview is the foundation for social, economic and environmental drivers necessary to achieve the sustainable ongoing development of their families and community. Thus, the Empowered Worldview approach becomes a critical foundation for realizing the sustainable development goals, as it mobilizes the much needed social and spiritual capital essential for sustainable change in any community and nation.

We are constantly reminded of our need to become more resilient. “Our future depends on action based on the human capacity to become more resilient, adapt, learn, re-create, invent, innovate, and yes—cocreate” (Kuenkel 50). My time in Uganda reinforced this conclusion and inspired me to embrace EWV and all the ways WV is building up communities.

Over my 20 days and through the course of two work trips, I spent most of my time there collecting information and validating secondary data to map the landscape, stakeholders, and identify the gaps in services and prioritize the most pressing community needs. The breadth of the content from our focus group discussions was as expected. We encountered groups of quiet villagers hesitant to share. As they began to open up, they revealed a deep sense of helplessness and expectation on the part of the NGOs. They also raised many important issues that we were not aware of. They had no idea of their own role in the development process, and they seemed completely uninterested in putting forth the effort to begin. Ugandan Program Manager Phionah Athuare confirmed that in the West Nile, the “people possess a strong culture that is mindful of one another” and this is starting point for us to begin the EWV conversation.

Conversations at the village level revealed the problem to be what their leaders and WV staff kept referring to as “lacking a spirit of volunteerism.” This sentiment was echoed in my interviews with West Nile program officers Philiam Adriko and Phionah Athuare. The responses to almost all the questions about needs in the community came down to one answer – “poverty.”

Of course, poverty is a root cause of the problems these villages are facing, but it is so much more than that, as this paper has explored. Poking and prodding didn't succeed in moving the discussion to anything deeper than the conclusion that an NGO needed to solve the problem. When asked about this after a particularly draining and round-about group discussion, my coworker stated that NGOs have "trained" this response in the communities. I saw this same sentiment evident in comments of a Tanzanian co-worker at WV. Francis Frayaro, a sponsorship officer, said that

Like everybody else I knew, I would always say, "But I don't have the capital." It was like a slogan. "I don't have capital" or "I'm waiting to get capital." But I never had a specific plan for getting it. Fear was holding me back. What if I can't manage? What if I lose a lot and come out without any profit? Often, I will be speaking with somebody and they are blaming something or someone for their problems, but I see the opportunity all around them. I will tell them, you say you have nothing, but what about this chicken? I can show them so many things they have. And everything you see around you is an opportunity, if you value it. Even if it seems impossible, the way will come. Life has no formula. (qtd. in Muvengi 32)

I am no stranger to the cycle of dependence and the reality that international aid often results in these destructive attitudes, yet this response illustrated something different. In one particular community, the sense of their own helplessness was palpable. It was a place far off the beaten path of aid workers, where they hadn't received any support or services. They had basically waited around, believing it was the responsibility of the government to solve their problems. The belief that "somebody will come from somewhere" to help with this, or to provide us this (Muvengi) was debilitating, discouraging and completely disempowering. I am not sure at what

point they were convinced that they had to wait for someone else to solve their problems—it seemed to be generational. These communities have a problem with their worldview. They have come to believe that they are powerless. When they looked around, they didn't see ways for them to improve their situation. The power with the EWV training is that it breaks this cyclical mind-trap. According to Adam Ipingika, a Ward Counsellor in Tanzania, “for a long time, people around here have thought they needed outside help to do things. Empowered Worldview helped me see that we need to change this, that we needed to break our ‘dependency syndrome’ and become self-reliant (qtd. in Muvengi 33).

The significance of worldview is that it touches every aspect of our development. The same intervention can apply to different contexts with a wide variety of results solely based on the worldview undergirding the attitudes and behaviors of individuals and groups. EWV and similar approaches strengthen protective factors that make communities resilient by unlearning destructive behaviors and learning new productive ones. We must not underestimate the opportunities to make small real improvements rather than laboring under idealistic and unrealistic expectations that never materialize in any meaningful way. People farther away from the problem (the less affected) are less effective at creating effective solutions. It is a combination of not understanding the root causes, not experiencing the impact personally, and not being accountable for the results.

A colleague at WV likened work in fragile contexts to a Rubik's Cube, observing that “the political, economic, social, environmental and security components are different sides of the issue. We must experiment and connect with multiple stakeholders, moving the Rubik's Cubes”. The international development community is always looking to the next generation of solutions,

but we can't forget that the answer is sometimes about the difference in degrees, or a few moves of the Rubik's Cube, or a small shift in perspective.

Concerning DRR, it is important to apply the vantage point of the community and how its members perceive issues of risk and resilience. As DRR specialists Steven Latham has expressed, "Resilience is a skill-set that can be acquired". I would go further and say that not only can it be acquired, but it must be acquired. Disaster relief and development activities can and must complement one another, and we need the communities to ensure they do so. As we have seen, it is increasingly necessary that these be integrated. Protection Officer, Philiam Adriko echoes this sentiment, stating that "children's resilience is built" (Adriko). He describes a slow process of building capacities and taking responsibilities. Models that foster self-esteem, confidence, and assertiveness are essential to empowerment.

Furthermore, transformation should happen at all levels, each one reinforcing the other. The grassroots activity stirs the people and builds their capacity for acting as their own change agents. The laws and institutional systems provide the structure that provide a forum for their voices to be heard and an avenue for longer lasting and effective change. As Bryant Myers claims, "The way we understand the causes of poverty, also tends to determine our response to poverty" (152). He goes on to explain that those who see the problems at a community level will engage there, while others who see the systemic concerns will focus on policy and higher-level change.

Perez Odera is the Chairperson of the local Widow's Savings Group. She and her children live in Kasrunda village, Kenya. She shared with WV that thanks to EWV, she sees herself differently. She is doing things that before, she never thought she could do. "The training opened my eyes. It made me see that the traditions do not have power. It is only God that gives

us the way. Now I have the strength and courage to follow my own path. I don't need a man to take care of me. I can do it" (qtd. in Muvengi 44). Perez is just one of the hundreds of people that have been transformed through EWV. She is part of a network that is spreading empowerment and building resilience across East Africa.

After thorough analysis, I have found that EMV is the most relevant approach to addressing the pockets of fragility, though less applicable in states experiencing a high degree of volatility. It begins with a straightforward, though not so simple, steps towards bringing the community together. From there, the members are empowered to take the reins and transform their own futures.

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