



Irrigated crop field

Grundfos' partner goes the extra mile to improve life for African refugees

Grundfos' partner in Uganda, Akvo International, has set up irrigation infrastructure in the north of the country, in one of the world's largest refugee settlements, using a Grundfos submersible pump to extract groundwater. The aim is to improve the livelihoods of refugees who have fled to this remote camp from conflicts in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The situation

Civilisation is hours away on bumpy and dusty roads, and the sun beats down mercilessly, as it does every day. It is hot and dry. Up until 2016 Bidibidi in northwestern Uganda, near where the borders of Uganda, DRC and South Sudan meet, was just another small village much like any other.

But in the years since then, it has expanded into one of the world's largest refugee settlements – several hundred thousand refugees are accommodated in an area of about 235km². Most of them have fled civil unrest and upheaval in neighbouring South Sudan and the DRC.

“...they wanted a high-quality, robust, reliable and durable solution, which is why Grundfos was a good fit for us.”

Daniel Eberu

Akvo Branch manager, Arua, Uganda

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GRUNDFOS 

Possibility in every drop



One of the world's largest refugee settlements, Bidibidi, Uganda

The solution

In February 2022 one of Grundfos' partners in Uganda, the irrigation and solar pumping company Akvo International, completed a project to set up irrigation infrastructure on a 19-acre (just over 7 ha) field in the refugee settlement, using both drip and sprinkler systems.

The sprinkler system is driven by direct pumping, with up to 12 sprinklers running at the same time, and the drip system is fed by gravity from two water tanks of 10,000-litre capacity each, which are mounted on stands three metres high.

The underground water is pumped from a 90-metre borehole using a Grundfos SP pump coupled to a 7.5kW motor and 36 solar modules. It uses an off-grid renewable solar energy inverter (RSI) from Grundfos to ensure maximum efficiency and performance.

Daniel Eberu, Akvo International's branch manager in Arua in Uganda's northern region, says Grundfos helped to ascertain which pump was best suited to the job and provided training for local partners to ensure the success of the project.

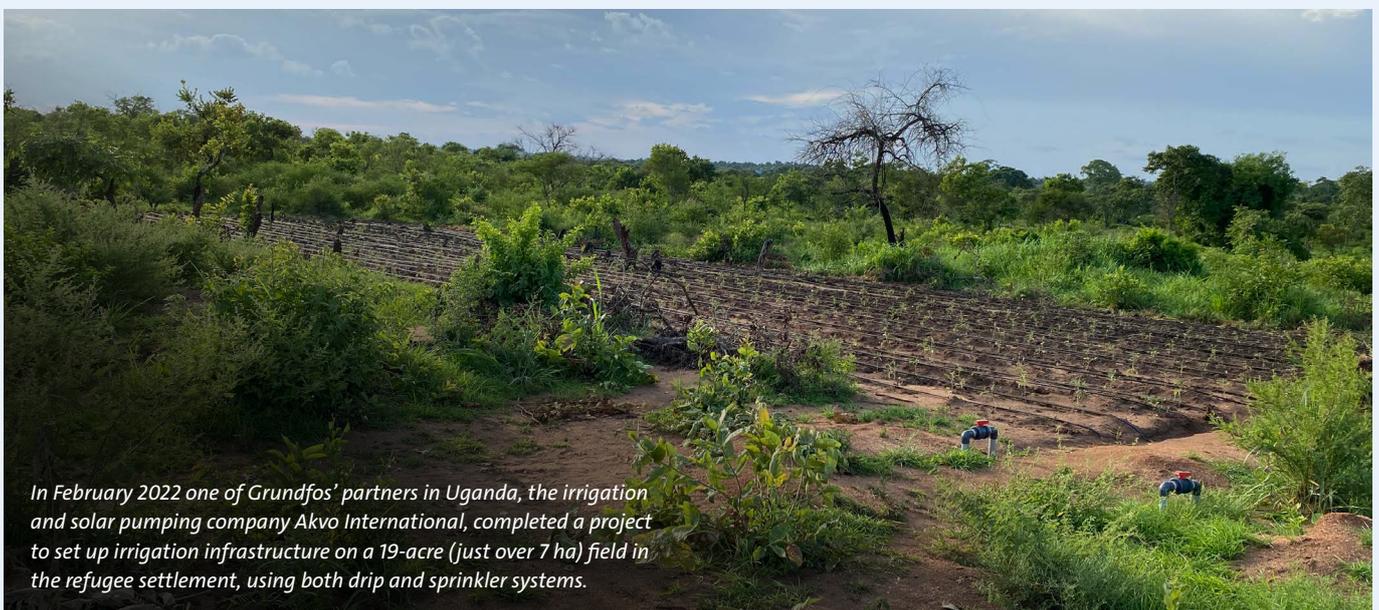
The region is extremely remote and beset by drought, water scarcity and famine, which makes life hard for those who live there.

"But we have peace. There is no war here," says refugee Elizabeth Leyo, 39, who fled South Sudan in 2016 with her two children, having lost her husband in the conflict.

She is part of an upliftment project at Bidibidi in which refugees learn basic irrigation skills and techniques. They grow crops such as onions, tomatoes, cabbages and green peppers, both to supplement their diets and to make a little cash.



Grundfos SP-family



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“For us this is interesting for several reasons,” he says. “First, of course it makes sense to be part of a project that improves the life of vulnerable people. And from a business perspective, we establish a good reputation with the NGOs. After all, it is the biggest irrigation project in the area. And the NGO stipulated in the project criteria that they wanted a high-quality, robust, reliable and durable solution, which is why Grundfos was a good fit for us.”

The NGO driving the project is Samaritan’s Purse. Its procurement officer, Bright Mwanje, says it was a priority to implement a solution that will continue to function even after the NGO completes its mandate and leaves the area one day. And he says he is satisfied with how the system has been designed and set up.

“It is our goal to create lasting impact so we can leave some sort of legacy behind us. At the same time, it is our strong desire to empower people to generate an income and to supplement the rations they get from the World Food Programme with fresh vegetables,” he says. The WFP rations mainly consist of maize, beans and rice, and are gradually reduced in size to encourage recipients to become more self-sufficient.

“Ultimately, the refugees should be able to take these new agriculture and farming skills back to their home countries, when they return one day, to improve their lives.”



Elizabeth Leyo, refugee

“It is really good, because we are getting vegetables both to eat and to sell, so I can buy clothes to my children. I am thankful to be here.”

Elizabeth Leyo
Refugee

Elizabeth Leyo is glad to be part of the project. “I like it very much, and I am learning new farming methods that I had not seen before,” she says. “It is really good, because we are getting vegetables both to eat and to sell, so I can buy clothes to my children. I am thankful to be here.”

The outcome

More than 100 refugees are now working as farmers as part of this project, making more money, improving their skills and raising nutrition levels; counting their dependents, more than 1,400 people are reaping the benefits.