

Waku Iddi, 38, transforms once-abandoned rocky land into a thriving climate-resilient farm in Yumbe, Uganda

In Kululu Sub-county of Yumbe District, many families have long considered parts of their land too dry, too rocky, or too degraded to produce anything. For decades, rocky patches like those in Agyogi Parish's Kamala village were used only for grazing animals. Farming there was seen as impossible. Among those who held this belief was **38-year-old farmer, Waku Iddi**, a member of the *Go Green Farmers Group* established by PICOT under the URRI program. He remembers what his father told him about their land:

"In the 1940s, my father said this land was abundant. But as I grew up, the soil in this land is seen as useless. For over 80 years, nothing was grown from here."

When the **URRI Project**, implemented in West Nile, Yumbe by PICOT through application of **Resilience Design (RD) approach**, identified his land as a potential demonstration site in September 2025, the entire farmer group rejected the idea. Even Iddi the land lord doubted it.

"We all said this land has never produced anything. You can't make miracles here."

But for the sake of learning, Iddi agreed to provide his 0.8-acre plot for the RD demonstration site.



Photo showing the once-abandoned rocky land in Kamala village Kululu Sub-county of Yumbe District

Turning hopeless land into a climate-resilient system

When the URRI PICOT team began guiding the construction of RD trenches using the A-frame, community members looked on in disbelief. Digging into the hard, stony soil made many think the team was wasting their time. Yet, the group completed all the RD structures - including trenches, contours, and planting basins, then covered the soil with organic material such as cow dung and grasses which were previously burned during land clearing.

Soon after, we planted **16 varieties of vegetables**, including cabbages, pumpkins, chukamba, and beans, alongside **five species of trees** distributed for soil restoration and shade.

The transformation was quick and visible.



The photo shows a Iddi tending to a vibrant garden filled with healthy green cabbages, climbing plants, and mulched soil—clear evidence of how the once-barren land has become productive under the RD system

Resilience Design: more benefits than expected

Iddi explains that RD brought unexpected advantages:

- **Organic matter**—grass that was once burned—became valuable mulch and manure.
- **Crop diversity** improved the household diet and provided a steady income.
- **Water-harvesting trenches** captured runoff from nearby rooftops and compounds, keeping the soil moist for long periods, even when rains became unreliable.

“Here in Yumbe, rain does not come consistently. But the RD trenches collect water and keep our garden wet for long. That is why our crops survive even during dry weeks.”

Today, Iddi earns between **UGX 8,000 and 15,000 per week** from the sales of mixed crops, while still feeding his family daily with fresh vegetables.

“Every week I sell produce, and still my family eats better than before. Our diet has changed completely.”

He attributes this transformation to the knowledge gained from the PICOT training on Resilience design:

“We have learned how to turn unproductive land into a garden. The URRI PICOT team has helped us see that even rocky land can become useful with the right design.”

URRI Program in West Nile: Building resilience through RD demonstration sites

The **Uganda Refugee Resilience Initiative (URRI) Programme Empowerment** communities in West Nile to build sustainable, long-term resilience. **Outcome 2** of URRI focuses on Sustainable Management of Environment by empowering farmer groups through **Resilience Design demonstration sites**, where they learn: water harvesting, soil conservation, mixed cropping, agroforestry and organic nutrient recycling as Sustainable land Management practices to the Environment.

Within the first year of implementation, **198 community farmer groups** across Yumbe, Koboko, Terego, Madi Okollo, Moyo, and Obongi established RD demonstration plots. These sites serve as practical learning centers where farmers witness degraded land being restored into productive systems that withstand drought and climate shocks. The approach is helping communities shift from dependence on external aid to self-reliance through regenerative agriculture.

A new chapter for Kamala village

Just months after being dismissed as a “hopeless plot,” Iddi’s land now stands as a model for the entire community. Neighbors who once doubted him now come to learn from his plot.

For Iddi, the change is deeply personal:

“I never believed anything could grow here. Now, the land is feeding my family and giving us income. This is real resilience.”

Through URRI’s Resilience Design approach, Waku Iddi and the Go Green Farmers Group have shown what is possible when knowledge, community effort, and regenerative techniques come together—even on land once abandoned for generations.

| Waku Iddi – farmer Yumbe.

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