

## 21-year-old refugee mother saves with a purpose.

Modong Lona is a 21-year-old refugee single mother of two (2) children, Pita Trudy - 4 years old and Fancy Bongilia - 9 months old. She is a resident of Zone 3 West Idiwa 1 village Obongi district waka parish in Itula sub-county.

Becoming a refugee in Uganda in 2017 was the worst unfortunate unfolding of her life. Over 180 kilometers away from home which if you look backwards draws tears in her eyes, livelihood had been lost, lives were lost, property destroyed, future in a balance, schools destroyed and education jeopardized. **'As if being a South Sudanese refugee in Uganda was a punishment for her'** - she recalls – starting from absolutely nothing but a blanket, tumplines, assorted non-food items, 30\*30m piece of land seemed a dream but after one week she was forced to accept the reality.

Her husband (Patrick Nyara) was living in the settlement with her at the time when they newly settled, after her conceiving with the first child he went back to South Sudan with absolutely no support for her. He came back in 2020 and got her pregnant with the second child – just like before he disappears for South Sudan except for good this time. Life was very hard because her husband married a second woman in Kajo Keji and stopped supporting her and the children, therefore all the home responsibilities rested on her shoulders.



Mrs. Lona Modong sewing belle primary school uniforms at Belle Biometrics center.

In 2021, she got to know about RICE West Nile through the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) interventions especially the parenting groups where the parents of children enrolled in the centers are taught about parenting skills and also how to become self-reliant through starting up Income generating activities. The same groups are also supported to grow vegetables for income generation. It's from this moment that Lona become interested and joined the Longa parenting group because she was not getting any form of support from her husband and as a single mother, she needed to engage herself in activities that would sustain her and her two children.

However, after joining Longa savings group, she was motivated to start saving by selling some of the monthly food ratios from WFP to get some little income. The ambitious young mother wanted more but how to get more was challenging, she then spoke to her aunt Mrs. Annet Modong who is 48 years old and a tailor to help teach her how to saw clothes at a cost of Ugx. 15,000 per month in the month of December

2022. After 2 months of learning, she started hiring her aunt's sewing machine at a sum of Ugx. 50,000 per month and she would get a profit of 20,000 per day which motivated her to work harder where she saved a total of Ugx. 350,000 in one cycle. Mrs. Lona bought two (2) goats - a he goat at Ugx. 120,000 and she goat at Ugx. 130,000 and she used the rest of the money to pay her child's school fees and also provide



Mrs. Lona Modong (left) and ECCE Project Officer (right) with her two goats in Idiwa 1 village where she grazes them.

some of the basic needs at home. To her joining the saving group motivated her to work hard to look for money to save. The goats are future plans for her and her children, the absence of her husband no longer worries her.

She is so grateful to RICE West Nile for helping her become self-reliant through the parenting group as she is quoted saying

***“My future plan is to ensure that i take care of***

***my goats very well so that they multiply up to 5 so that I will exchange them with a big female cow, I want to own a farm.”***

Mrs. Modong Lona encouraged RICE West Nile to continue with the positive interventions of helping them become self-reliant as single mothers then she urges the women in the settlement going through her walk of life not to give up but instead work harder.