

# A Ray of Hope for Cicilia

Life for Cicilia Olivier Juru, 24-year-old South Sudanese drastically took a turn for the worst when the war broke out in 2017. Forced to flee her home, she was rescued and brought to Palorinya refugee settlement in Obongi District. Being brought to Palorinya Settlement however wasn't Cicilia's first time in Uganda unlike many of her fellow South Sudanese refugees.

**“Back at home in South Sudan, I used to work as a Community Mobilizer for BRAC earning 120 US Dollars”**



Cicilia recalls with a bright smile her time as a student at Moyo Secondary School. She speaks well of the friendly environment at the school at the time. The smile however is short lived when she speaks of having dropped out of school in 2011 after completing the Uganda Certificate of Education. She couldn't continue with education because of financial challenges at home. Her father couldn't continue paying my school fees beyond \$4.

On 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017, Cicilia arrived in Palorinya settlement which has been her home to date. In 2018, Cicilia was fortunate enough to be employed as a Hygiene

Promoter by Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Zone 3 West till 2019 when the contract came to an end.

**“After my job with LWF came to an end, I became a house wife solely depending on farming.”**

Cicilia was able to secure a small piece of land in Belle village that was given to her by the LC 1 Mr. Safi Mustafa Geriga. The half-acre piece given to her, she used to plant sesame (simsim) seasonally earning between 160,00/= to 200,000/= from the harvest. The earnings were spent on paying school fees for her 4 daughters and footing household expenses as well.

In 2021, Cicilia learnt about the TVET project implemented by RICE West Nile in Zone 3 through the Community awareness meetings organized by the Project Officer. She later picked the application forms from the office of the RWC 2 Zone 3 West. Fortunately, she was shortlisted and later enrolled at SPC life skills center in Village C.

The life skills training helped me in developing self-confidence and become more self-reliant. It helped me in organizing my life in general” It is from such confidence that Cicilia was able to contest and be elected the Women and Children's Affairs Representative in the Office of the RWC 2 Zone 3 West.

Through the networks created at the TVET center, Cicilia has been able to organize and form a group of 15 ladies all fully trained in Tailoring and Garment Cutting to receive their group start-up kits.

Cicilia also acquired knowledge on Psychosocial Support which she has used to help women and children facing emotional challenges and psychosocial challenges in her position as the Women and Children's Affairs Representative for Zone 3 West. To her she became exemplary in the community and many women now look up to her in the community because of the training received in TVET.

Currently Cicilia operates a Tailoring shop in Kiniba-Maradadi market where she earns Ugandan Shillings 5,000-10,000/= daily approximately between Ugandan Shillings 150,000- 300,000/= monthly. She incurs an operating cost of 25,000/= in machine hire. The balance is saved in her savings group Min Allah Saving Group in Village A. Asked why she chose Tailoring; Cicilia says her intention was to save the money she was spending on making clothes for 4 daughters.

**“I was spending a lot of money to make them clothes especially during the festive season”**

But just beyond saving money spent on making clothes for her daughters, Cicilia's life has improved from the earnings she is making.

Her plan is that after working for 2 years she will be able to return to school and pursue her dreams. Cicilia wants to pursue a Diploma in Procurement and Logistics. All of this has been brought to light because of the contributions of TVET in her life.

Her message to fellow youths in the settlement is that; They shouldn't take things for granted even the small things. I encourage them to take up these opportunities for self-improvement through projects like TVET.