

## LIQUID SOAP SAVES REFUGEES IN IMVEPI SETTLEMENT IN COVID-19 ERA

This is the story of Mrs. Poni Neima a refugee settled in Imvepi Refugee Settlement. The Twenty-Nine (29) year old Neima is a kakwa by tribe from Yei river state settled in village 04 with all her 11 household members since 2017 after being forced to flee from South Sudan for safety.

In March 2020 when the first COVID-19 case was registered in Uganda, a lot of measures were put in place to curb the spread. Many Ugandans started living in fear and not only that the refugee settlements were in great risk of exposure due to the influx of partners in the settlement to respond to the pandemic. Many refugees living in the

community that supply most of the food items in the market places started fearing for their lives due to the mobile nature of the refugees even in the pandemic era.

*“As refugees we normally get food items from the host community members, they started avoiding selling to us because we are refugees.”* – She explains.

Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE-WN) in partnership with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is implementing a COVID-19 response project called *‘Improving WASH and Information access on COVID-19 in Imvepi Refugee Settlement and host communities’* aimed at *“Improving access to information and sustainable WASH facilities for at-risk-low capacity and fragile communities to increase their protection against COVID-19”*

The project mainstreamed training of community members on making of liquid soap as a sustainability plan to the project, translation of the Ministry of Health and World Health Organization



staying home if you feel unwell among others - now everyone follows the directive of washing hands thoroughly so often and since then hygiene and sanitation has improved in the family. Every visitor coming to the homestead is compelled to wash hands at the tippy tap installed at the main entrance. Partners from risky destinations are advised to pass through the Refugee Welfare Council One's office before accessing her homestead as a safety measure.

Poni's family knowledge on the pandemic has increased from the awareness creation materials translated in arabic and kakwa disseminated in her community. Additionally, she has not recorded any health related infections in the family apart from malaria. In a day they use 10 liters of water mixed with the