

Short term goals lead to long term success.

In Metu Sub County there exists a community group called *Amareeri* literally translating ‘we understand each other’ in the madi dialect. It is among the 333 savings and development cluster (SDCs) in Moyo and Obongi districts that is supported by RICE West Nile to empower the members economically.

Magbwi Peter aged 34 years is one among the 30 community members of Izzi village that came together to form this group. Married to two wives (Rose and Agnes) with 8 children, the young man has lived in the village for over 20 years relying on farming as the primary source of income. Besides having the interest for farming, the technical skills of farming better have lack not only in him but in the group members as well. Life nonetheless has not been a smooth journey for him, plans and goals are set year in year out but no reliable means of income to achieve the goals.

In July 2020, Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile with support from European Union started implementing an economic empowerment project titled ‘Security, Protection and Economic Empowerment in Northern Uganda’. Moyo and Obongi districts being the target districts for the project enhanced community members chances of directly benefiting from the project since their sub county – Metu among three others (Lefori, Moyo and Palorinya) are targeted for the four years implementation.

The facilitator who is a tomato farmer once sold tomatoes worth Ugx. 34 million in the same district where Mr. Peter hails from. The young ambitious man felt challenged and blamed himself for not exposing enough to learn about new methods of farming. With a very supportive family, Peter engaged in his garden work. He reminded his wives and the children that the tomato garden is their school fees, medical fees which even motivated the family to work harder.



Left: Photo showing Mr. Peter at his home after harvesting tomatoes from the garden.



In 2020 November, mapping of the SDCs was conducted and Amareeri Savings group emerged successful based on the project defined criteria. The following year in March 2021, the project started Enabling Rural Innovation (ERI) trainings with the SDC – ERI is an expectation leveling and mind changing approach the project uses to broaden the thinking of the farmers.

“I was challenged by my facilitator during the exposure visit in Abi Zardi organized by RICE west Nile. I said to myself I must get half of the money this man got from my district in selling tomatoes ...” – says Peter

The project supports SDCs with farm inputs and tools, trainings on ERI, local capacities for peace, farmer managed natural resource regeneration, among others. Upon completion of module III the groups are expected to establish demonstration gardens upon selecting a viable enterprise within their markets of sale. The demonstration gardens serve a purpose of being learning sites for the SDC members and other community members as well as economically empowering the SDCs.



Photo above showing RICE West Nile project team interacting with Mr. Peter in his tomato garden routine monitoring visit. – photo credit: Rolex Aleku.

Peter harvested tomatoes and made a remarkable profit worth Ugx. 10 million. Unbelievable to the young man because this was money he dreamt of and had never seen. He immediately bought a bajaj motorcycle which he uses to do *boda-boda* business when he is farming. The same motorcycle eases his transportation to the nearby markets within the sub county, Moyo town and other big markets like Lefori. Besides selling in the main markets, community members visit and buy from home. He also does home deliveries for those that place orders on phone. His dream is to buy a pick-up truck which he will use to transport his produce in bulk to other bigger markets.

In November 2021, an exposure visit was organized for two members per SDC. Among the 517 farmers that went to Abi Zardi in Arua City, Mr. Peter was inclusive. He paid attention to details because this is an opportunity he had never received in his life. He came back and transferred the knowledge and skills to the rest of the group members. He immediately opened a two-quarters acre piece of land and spent Ugx. 200,000 on rent, he planted tomato asila F1 using the best practices learned. This was now additionally knowledge to the tomato demonstration garden best practices the group had applied. He used Ugx. 600,000 for buying the tomato seeds and Ugx. 140,000 for digging, Ugx. 200,000 for mulching, Ugx. 150,000 for weeding, Ux. 150,000 on pesticides, and Ugx. 750,000 on transport totaling to Ugx. 2,190,000.

Hungrier for money, now the young ambitious man seeks for more marketing support from bulk buyers, hotels, institutions to come and buy his produce. He still could not believe the best practices in the shortest time earned him the amount of money. He remains grateful to RICE West Nile and European Union for the knowledge and skills offered.

He got more motivated by the testimony shared by the facilitator he met during the exposure visit.