

Plant a seed and watch it grow!

Moyo district is one of the oldest districts in Uganda created in 1956 before the declaration of independence of Uganda. Originally, it was known as Madi District with Adjumani inclusive.

About 80% of the households in Moyo District depend mainly on subsistence agriculture as their main economic activity. Only 9.7% of the population is dependent on earned incomes and 0.4% on property income.



A Photo showing the house being constructed by Ms. Bayoa Celina.

Bayoa Celina, a 61-year-old farmer and madi by tribe is no exception when it comes to subsistence agriculture. With her five grown up children she has lived in Aringa West Village village in Metu Sub County for over 30 years. Her husband passed on in 2013, the responsibility of heading the household entirely rested on Celina's shoulders. With no stable source of income, this drew stress on the old woman. Feeding, Medication, School fees, Clothing among others took the lion share of Celina's earnings.

Being the head of the family of six, planning the little resources earned to meet their basic needs was challenging. The need for proper housing set in, sometimes the family members would go a day or two without any meal especially in the seasons where there were poor farm yields. She laments during this monitoring visit that *'life was fine with my husband alive'*. Amidst all the challenges faced, giving up was not an option for the strong woman. Coupled with the material and basic needs-oriented challenges, psychosocially Ms. Bayoa was drained. In 2018, she joined *Aringa West Windows group* where their main objective was to save and support each other. The group with a total membership of 30 women who are widows – use this as an avenue for sharing their challenges.

God's never early, never late, but always on time when the group in which Ms. Celina belongs was selected to benefit under SUPREME. 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 Ms. Celina's chances of directly benefiting from the project since her sub county – Metu among three others (Lefori, Moyo and Palorinya) are targeted for the four years implementation. The project works through savings and development clusters (SDCs) targeting 333 across the project scope.

In 2020 November, mapping of the SDCs was conducted and Aringa West Widows emerged successful based on the project defined criteria.



Ms. Bayoa Celina narrating her story to the MEAL Officer at her home in Metu Sub County Photo credit: Rolex Aleku.

"I have the vision to sleep in a mabati house (iron sheet roofed house), I have planted g.nuts to complete the house ..." - says Ms. Bayoa Celina

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. Ms. Bayoa Celina who had joined the group with an aim of improving her household's wellbeing and psychosocial support found this interesting. After completion of module one (Participatory diagnosis) which has key components of visioning and action planning, Ms. Bayoa Celina got challenged and set a goal for her household. The goal was to shift from the grass thatched house to an iron sheet roofed house, but in order to achieve the dream she realized more efforts had to be ploughed. The attendance of the trainings featured in her routine weekly plan.

She immediately increased her savings from Ugx. 1,000 on weekly basis to Ugx. 3,000 in order to achieve her dream. By the end of the group saving cycle, she got Ugx. 360,000 which she invested fully in buying iron sheets and timber for her dream house. Since the bricks were laid by her children, she then had to borrow loan of Ugx. 150,000 from the group for buying cement and paying the skilled labor.

The household has also learnt to farm for both commercial and subsistence. She recalls; ***"I used to sell everything harvested from the garden."*** Ms. Bayoa has since then been keeping balance of the produce for household consumption. They used to eat once a day, either lunch or dinner but nowadays she has food enough to have three meals a day.

She has planted ground nuts – half an acre using the knowledge from the demo garden established, bought two goats with an intention of selling them after multiplication and raising more money to complete her house.

Ms. Bayoa Celina's story is an inspiration to many widows out there who have failed to stand strong again. She thanks RICE West Nile and her group members for accommodating her. She encourages fellow women in her walk of life; ***"A group is very important, and whatever you learn from the group should be used to change your life."***