

RURAL INITIATIVES FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT (RICE-WN)

*"Transforming Lives of Conflict-affected Girls in
West Nile"*
HANDBOOK



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Topic of the project: “Transforming Lives of Conflict-affected Girls in West Nile”

Goal: To improve performance and economically empower conflict-affected girls and their families

Objectives: To increase retention of conflict-affected secondary school girls and conflict-affected out-of-school girls

To build the capacity of conflict-affected secondary school and out-of-school girls in entrepreneurial and leadership skills

To create conducive learning environment for conflict-affected girls

Funded by: Global Fund for Children (GFC)



Implemented by: Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE-WN)

Budget: Between USD15000 – 19000 annually

Duration: Started implementation in July, 2014 to date (annual renewals are done).

Beneficiaries: Conflict (war or ethnic) affected girls

Beneficiary Selection: Done using the existing structures i.e. DCDOs office, LC offices for local communities; OPM and RWC offices for refugee settings. RICE-WN conducts verification of the identified girls using a set criteria to select final beneficiaries

From 2015 to date: 50 girls have been supported; 33 girls in secondary school and 17 girls in vocational schools.

Geographical scope: This project benefits both refugees and local conflict-affected girls from Arua, Koboko and Yumbe districts in West Nile, South Sudanese and Congolese in Rhino Camp Refugee Settlement. The girls are enrolled in schools within Arua district.

RICE-WN has been working with conflict affected girls for about 4 years now. These are girls from families with a history of conflicts. This includes those affected by armed conflicts in our neighbouring countries of Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan which has led to deaths of parents leaving orphans and the girl children as family heads fending for their siblings. Children are then left with either one parent or have to live with step parents. Other forms of conflict faced by these girls include; Child labour resulting from death of parents and living with step parents, sexual abuse in form of rape, defilement and early marriages which are common incidences in our region. As a result, the girls have limited access to basic services such as education, health, water, improved crops and animals for livelihood.

Categories of beneficiaries include secondary school and vocational training who are supported in the following area;

- Areas of support:
 - Vocational Skills training
 - Secondary school education
 - Psychosocial support
 - Adolescent Reproductive health education
 - Entrepreneurial skills training
 - Health care
- Mentorship:
 - Life skills
 - Leadership skills
 - Career guidance
- Sustainable agriculture practice especially for secondary school beneficiaries

This project has not only benefited the conflict affected girls, but also the entire schools where they study from. Special emphasis has been laid on the girl children given their high vulnerability levels. In some of the schools the student have formed Young Agricultural clubs to encourage innovation and apply of skills, knowledge acquired from the project. School counselling has also been implemented for the girls by the senior woman teacher in some of the school.

This project goal and objectives relates to the overall RICE-WN mandate of community empowerment and sustainability. In West Nile region, there is a need to focus investments on individual and community level vulnerability over those at the household level. The main concern of this project is thus to identify and address challenges relating to conflict-affected girls in a bid to decrease their vulnerability amongst society.

A total of 50 girls got an opportunity to access education under this project. (17 for vocational and 33 for secondary education).

Key results of the project include the following

Result 1: Improved access to education for conflict-affected girls

All the 50 girls have been enrolled in boarding school as opposed to day school. This project aims at addressing barriers to accessing secondary education such as long distance to schools, lack of school fees, lack of scholastic materials and stigma especially among refugees. This barriers has been addressed through interventions such as taking girls to boarding, pay school fees, provision of scholastic materials, psychosocial support and mentorship sessions to build confidence and self-esteem.

On the other hand barriers to livelihood training such as few vocational institutions and long distance, lack of fees, lack of learning materials and lack of career guidance on course choices has been addressed through interventions such as taking girls to boarding/hostel, sponsoring the vocational training, provision of learning materials and proper career guidance prior to the commencement of training.

Result 2: Improved retention in school for conflict-affected girls

Out of the 33 secondary girls only 3 girls dropped out of school while 17 girls in vocational training completed. Through the project, barriers to girls' retention in school identified such as change of school due to increase in school fees, early pregnancy/motherhood, school fees challenges and lack of other school requirements and personal needs has been addressed through interventions such as – taking the girls to one school and providing them with some of basic requirements, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education, psycho-social support, equipping the girls with vocational skills to enable them get some income during holidays and weekends and provision of health care and renting of house for the girls with children.

Result 3: Improved learning conditions for conflict-affected girls

Vocational school girls are doing well as evidenced by the results so far got from the school and some improvement in performance of the secondary school girls has also been noticed from the results : Barriers to learning for secondary school girls such poor teaching in some schools, high teacher–student ratio, lack of learning materials and peer influence have been addressed through interventions that including taking the girls to credible schools – to address poor teaching and high teacher-student ratio in some schools, availing some learning materials such as textbooks and novels, mentorship sessions, clear terms of reference with schools.

Result 4: Improved progression for conflict-affected girls

Under secondary school category 23 girls out of 33 girls collected senior 4 while 7 are in senior 4 this year, while in vocational category 13 girls completed there training and 5 girls are in school this year.

RICE-WN has been tracking performance of the girls in school on a termly bases to measure progression on the next level of education. Whereas barriers to progression for livelihood such as lack of equipment for start off, lack of market opportunities and poor financial management skills has been addressed through interventions such as provision of start-up capital and equipment, guidance and identification of marketable courses and linking the beneficiaries to potential clients.

Progress of businesses established by the beneficiaries has been measured through income from the ventures.

Additional, through mentorship sessions held with the girls, there has been a notable change in self-esteem and confidence levels of all the girls compared to the time before the onset of the project support. During the sessions, the girls were able to stand in front of their colleagues and RICE-WN staff and talk about themselves, their families, aspirations and traumatizing experiences among others. Role plays were also acted to build their confidence levels.

Challenges

- Poor academic performance of some the secondary school conflict affected girls.
- Few vocational school that offer quality training.
- Short school term especially third term that could not allow implementation of some of the planned activities since these coincided with scheduled school activities on some of the weekends.
- Unfavorable weather that affected agricultural practice; second term had no rains while third term was too short and packed with activities.
- Identification of the target beneficiaries (some fake stories of war/ethnic conflicts)
- Language barrier that affected learning to some extent especially for vocational skills training

Lessons learnt

- Students need motivational language to enhance learning
- Partial support still leaves a big threat of dropping out for beneficiaries of school interventions.
- Continuous business mentorship is essential for sustaining the small enterprises initiated for the beneficiaries
- Small contributions can expose immense potentials and open up bigger opportunities for the beneficiaries we serve

A dark future turns lighter: A story of the girl from Nuba Mountains Sudan



Ms. Wasima Sadik, a 22-year-old girl from Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan, Sudan left her home country in June 2011 after a civil war broke up while they were at school. The war detached Wasima, along with her six (6) siblings, from their parents whose whereabouts remain unknown to-date. Rooted in the back of a truck, they migrated in a 1-week long journey to settle in Juba – the capital city of South Sudan – 799 km away from home. Uncertain of what the future held for them, Ms. Wasima and her siblings settled in Juba for 18 months (one and half years).

Another nightmare struck in December 2013 when conflict erupted between the South Sudan ruling government and the opposition. The second episode of their migration kicked off and landed Ms. Wasima and her six (6) siblings in Nimule at the border of Uganda and South Sudan where they lived for 1 month and later moved further to a safer location in Rhino Camp Refugee Settlement in Arua District of Uganda. There, she lived for 2 years, helpless and hopeless of further education for herself and her siblings.

When RICE-WN introduced the project funded by Global Fund for Children in 2015 to sponsor conflict-affected girls in secondary and vocational schools, Ms. Wasima got to know about the project through her young brother who broke the news to her. Although she was skeptical of any success with the application,

she decided to apply for the program.

Quote: *“I succeeded to fill the forms after my younger brother told me an organization was registering conflict affected girls to continue with education. I feel good and lucky to be part of the program.”* – Ms. Wasima Sadik, a beneficiary of the GFC Project.

To her surprise, she was successfully selected for support in the project. She was enrolled at Innovative Institute in Arua District to study a 3-months’ certificate course in Agriculture.



A dark future turns lighter

She is a brilliant girl who successfully finished the first three (3) months and proceeded further to undertake a two years' certificate course in Agriculture in 2016-2017 and is currently pursuing a one (1) year Diploma Course – to be finished in 2018 – at the same institute.

During her lifetime in the project, Ms. Wasima has been exposed to various activities and events. She attended an exchange visit program organized by GFC in Gulu District in October 2016 which added on to her knowledge and confidence to speak and network with people. During the visit, she shared her story with the partners present. They were moved by the story and blessed her with a token of Ush 1,000,000. She invested the money in a goat project back home.

Quote: “I presented what the ED was going to present during the meeting and shared my story with other partners. This earned me one million Ugandan shillings. I have used this money to start up my goat project in Ocea, my siblings and I are managing the project to support ourselves” – Ms. Wasima Sadik.

Ms. Sadik is an industrious, young and brilliant woman who uses her knowledge of agriculture gained from school to raise and maintain a garden within RICE-WN premises during her holidays. She hopes to own a farm in future and use the income from the farm to support her siblings in schools.

Quote: “I have a dream of owning a farm in the near future and use my skills to manage it. I plan to support all my siblings to attain at least a level of education so as to be independent and self-reliant.” – Ms. Wasima Sadik



Exclusive story of Alomo

When Alomo was in Primary three – about 10 years old, her father was killed by the Lord’s Resistance Army, a rebel group that terrorized areas of northern Uganda for more than 20 years.

Left to raise her two children for Alomo’s father alone, Alomo’s mother who was a house wife couldn’t keep up with providing the basic needs for her children including school fees. After her husband’s death, Alomo’s mother who returned back to her parent’s home later got married to another man who was not ready to care for Alomo. Her father’s death also forced Alomo to drop out of school—and lose sight of her dreams—before finishing high school. Along the way, Alomo was picked up by a cousin brother who is a Teacher in one of the Private Secondary Schools in Koboko Town. This brother did his best to support Alomo through Primary school up to Secondary level where Alomo was again forced to drop out in Senior three. This was because she often lacked the basic school requirements since the brother only focused on school fees which was always paid late and saw her miss school a lot hence perform poorly. After dropping out of school the second time, Alomo and the brother lost hope of securing a descent future for her since he could not raise enough money to support her through a skills training course.

Though the LRA has been driven out of the region, its impact endures: the war orphaned thousands of children, disrupted education, and destroyed livelihoods. Uganda’s youth are eager to contribute to their country’s economic and social transformation—but they struggle to get back into school and gain the skills they need.

Through its local networks, RICE-WN heard about Alomo and encouraged her to apply for its empowerment program. Specifically designed for girls affected by conflict, the program offers a combination of educational support, counseling, entrepreneurial and leadership training, and community engagement activities. Together, these initiatives lay the foundation for independence.

RICE-WN provided Alomo with a scholarship for vocational school, along with training in leadership and small business



Alomo while in school training for hair dressing

Exclusive story of Alomo

management. Today, Alomo runs her own hair salon and supports her mother, brother's family with household basics, siblings, and herself.

Quote: *“I am very happy with Alomo’s achievement in life. If she had not got this opportunity with RICE-WN, I am sure she would have been married by now with no means of income and would have brought more burden on me looking at the current trend of marriages of women who cannot provide anything for the home,”*

An equally happy Alomo who now earns a minimum of 40US Dollars per month, had this to say,

Quote: *“This is like a dream for me, I never imagined earning my own money. Following my graduation with a Certificate, if given another opportunity I would like to continue enhancing my skills in Saloon and Hair Dressing and pursue a Diploma course to offer a competitive advantage over the demanding market.”* She says there are still Hair styles she cannot handle and ends up missing out on such customers. She thanked RICE-WN and GFC for the support that has seen her realize part of her dreams already and is still optimistic for more opportunities that will see her advance in her career path.



Alomo working at her own salon earning a minimum of 40US Dollars per month



From left to right: Koli Boulis(2016), Bako Gloria (2016), Asianzu Nancy(RICE-WN), Angaika Jessica(2016), Sikina Annet(2016), and Alomo Joyce(2015)



Communications Officer Veronicah W. G takes a selfie with GFC graduates at “Flaminio Vocational Training Centre”

The Graduation of 2015 -2016 Vocational School GFC Beneficiaries!

After one year of vocational training, finally our GFC (Global Fund for Children) girls happily smile during their graduation ceremony on 1st December, 2017. These forever happy girls schooled at “Flaminio Vocational Training Centre” in Arua district. The school is one of the best training centres for excellent hands on knowledge; indeed it’s never too late to school!

In 2015, three (3) girls pursued tailoring courses and two (2) girls did salon and hair dressing whereas in 2016, two (2) girls did salon and hair dressing two (2) girls did salon and hair dressing and one (1) did catering. All these girls have successfully completed their training and are awarded certificates.



The girls thanked the organization for the opportunity and promised to work harder and smarter.



Angaika Jessika was trained on tailoring who is busy at her shop in Ombaci Koboko earning a total income of UGX 125,000per month.



Viola Jokudu one of the beneficiaries is now able to plait her customer's hair in her own salon which is strategically allocated along Koboko Yumbe road. She is now earning a total of UGX 100,000 per month.

VISION: A MODEL COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES PROVIDER FOR HOLISTIC TRANSFORMATION

MISSION: TO ADVANCE AND PROMOTE HEALTHY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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