

ANNUAL REPORT

2023

www.ricewestnile.org



Board Chair's Foreword



In 2023, amidst numerous humanitarian challenges, our vision of "A self-reliant, sustainable and holistically transformed society." has never been more crucial.

In alignment with the Strategic Plan 2020-2024, I am happy to report that RICE West Nile made tremendous progress in improving the well-being of children, youth, women, men and families in deprived communities.

A key milestone has been registered in tackling teenage pregnancy through the promotion of girl child education, and better parenting. This sets the foundation for building a better future for the country. I have witnessed the work

done in empowering livelihoods through collaboration with World Vision, Stromme Foundation, the European Union, and CHASE Africa. Households were supported to build resilience and sustain themselves in the face of the changing economic situation.

The achievements and insights shared in this report are reflections from various stakeholders. This year, we focused on empowering children, women, men and youth and involving them in diverse issues by reviewing the implementation strategies. They shared how RICE West Nile's work has impacted their lives and communities. They also identified key areas that could be improved, which we have committed to explore fully.

To sustain these achievements, the Board has approved the implementation of a range of policies to strengthen RICE West Nile's efficiency and resilience to carry on its "Promise" to the vulnerable communities. For the year ahead, the Board will continue supporting programme innovations and partnerships, with particular emphasis on local partners. I am confident that we will continue to transform the lives of many more vulnerable children, women, youth, men, families, and communities.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I convey sincere appreciation to all of you for your tireless contributions and efforts during the year.

Can. Onesmus Dralega

Chairman Board of Directors



Executive Director's Statement

Greetings RICE West Nile Family!

Three words describe the year 2023 for us **RESILIENT**, **TEAM SPIRIT** and **GROWTH**. We have continued to grow as a family and transform the lives of vulnerable communities.

2023, the fourth of our five-year strategic journey, was a trying one. We persevered through the challenges and came through with some pleasing results. Amidst the challenges, we reached 174,182 (53% Female) - 77, 346 (65.5%) were persons of concern, 227 were Persons with Disability. We are inspired by the fact that 98 % of those we serve could be categorized as the most vulnerable in the country.

Through our partnership with the Government, community, donors and supporters, a team of dedicated staff and volunteers, we were able to respond to the needs of these women, children, men and youth. They

required support in areas such as Resilient Livelihood, Education, Health, Environment and Natural Resource and Peacebuilding. This has been achieved through the use of our community-based programming models which incorporate structures such as the Savings and Development Clusters (SDCs), Local Authorities (LAs), and Village Health Teams (VHTs) among others.

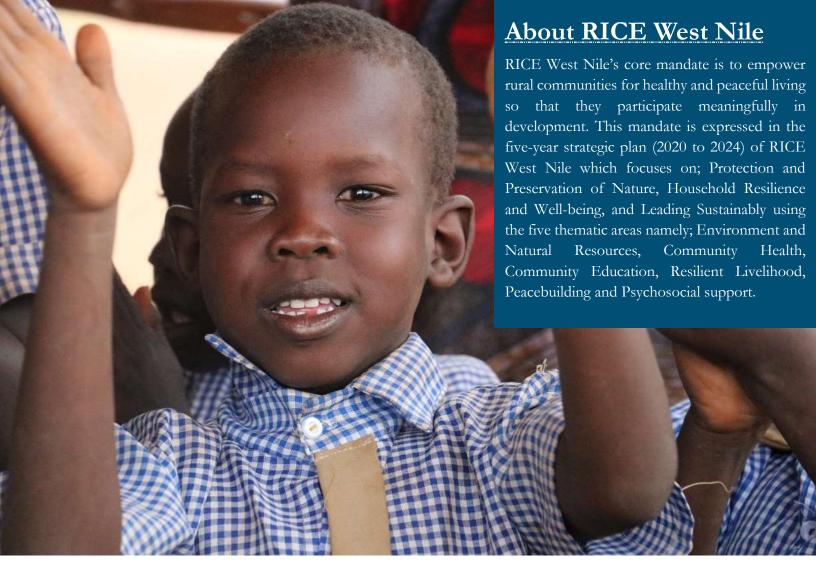
While the institution continues to expand its operations, the year presented new opportunities for RICE Wes Nile to complement the efforts of the Ugandan government in the fight against the Malaria epidemic by partnering with The Aids Support Organization (TASO) Uganda. On the other hand, with the International Labor Organization (ILO), we partnered to contribute to reducing unemployment among the youth in Uganda. Our partners' dedication and response to our work this year show a strong-willed spirit and commitment. With such collaborations, I am confident that we will surely attain more significant accomplishments.

I acknowledge the Government of Uganda, partners, supporters, staff and volunteers for their extraordinary efforts in serving the children.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the pivotal role of the Board of Directors in achieving the significant milestones highlighted in this report.

Thank you for taking on the journey of transforming with us.

Pax Sakari Executive Director



Mission:

To Kindle and facilitate a people-led and sustained protection of nature and the well-being of humanity.

Vision:

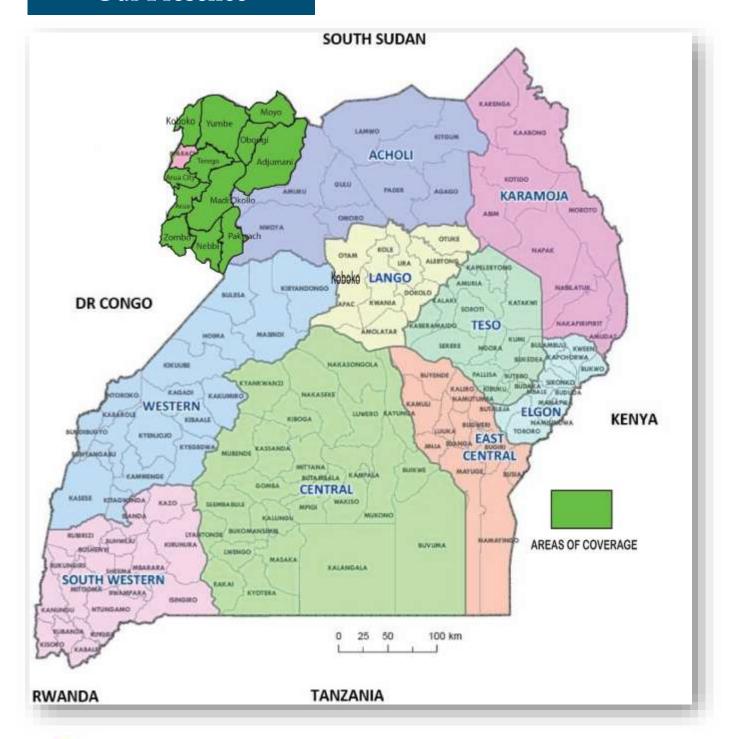
A self-reliant, sustainable and holistically transformed society.

Target Population:

Inclusively, we target vulnerable children, adolescents, youth, women and men, Persons Living with HIV (PLHIV), Key Population (KP), Persons with Disability (PWD) and least resilient households in hard-to-reach and underserved communities in refugee and host communities.



Our Presence





Terego | Madi Okollo | Obongi | Moyo | Nebbi | Pakwach | Zombo | Koboko | Yumbe | Arua | Arua City | Adjumani

174, 182 PEOPLE SERVED in 2023

53% Female



65.4% Persons of Concern



1,055 (71.3% Female) From Terego and Obongi youth and adolescents graduated from vocational training.

33 Stances of latrines constructed in Obongi



SCHOOL

10 Classrooms constructed/renova ted in Terego & Obongi District

1,729 Girls and
Boys Mobilized
to reintegrate in
Primary school





6,374
Assorted tree seedlings raised and managed

14.9%

Increase in Monthly
Household Income for least
resilient household
supported with development
grants



207

Demonstration
Gardens Established

80/0 Increase in Health Seeking Behaviors in Nebbi, Pakwach, Madi Okollo, Terego, Adjumani and Moyo districts. (133,055 OPD visits in May to 143,423 OPD visits in November)



Collaborating for Greater Change















Mennonite Central Committee















Resilient Livelihood



756,023,000 Ugandan shillings grant for vulnerable communities.

Community groups received block grants of 1,000 Euros each while 254 (39.7% n 101 Male, 60.2% n 153 Female) individual members received 1,500 Euros each for starting and expanding new enterprises

each for starting and expanding new enterprises approved by the local government and the project technical team. Female participants were given priority.

Of the 8,663 participants the project targets, 86% established new enterprises within the period. These include retail shops, poultry keeping, goat rearing, piggery, and farming among others.



Ugx 164,939 (42 euros) for host community

Ugx 102,841 (26 Euros) for refugees Current Monthly Household Income

●Ugx 183,247 (45.5 Euros) for host community.

•Ugx 121,799 (30.2 Euros) for refugees.

Between January and December 2023, an 18.8% increment in household income for the refugee community and an 11.1% increment for the host community was noticed only in the targeted households.



Diversification of Livelihoods for the host and refugee populations.

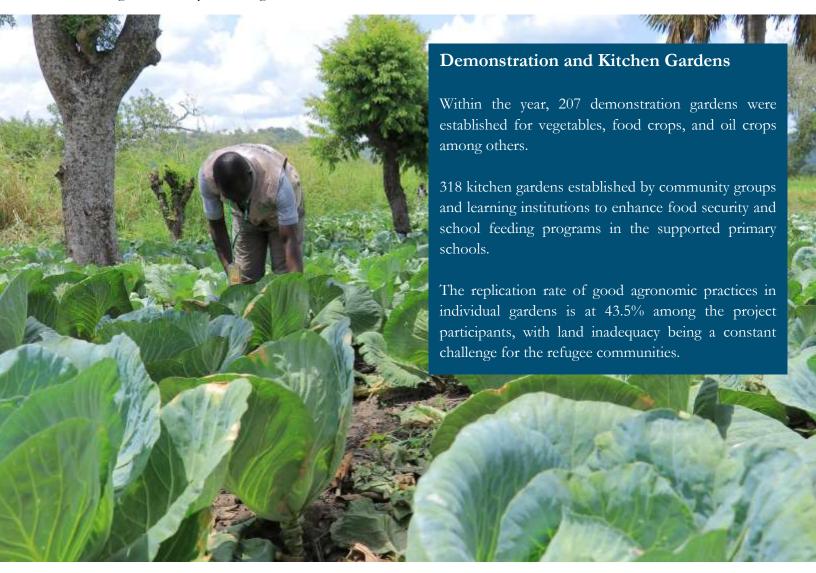
Over 14,700 (76.1% female) refugee and host community members were capacitated in financial literacy, sustainable agriculture, nutrition practices, modern farming techniques and horticulture for both commercial and food security. Agro inputs such as seeds, farm tools, goats, poultry chicken and feeds among others were distributed based on vulnerability.

48% of participants earned income from one (1) Income Generating Activity, 35% from two (2) IGAs, and 17% from three (3) IGAs.



Land Access for the Refugee and Host Community Farmers

In 2023, through different approaches, RICE West Nile facilitated access to land for individual farmers and farmer groups. 30 (15 Refugee groups, 15 Host Community groups) accessed over 40 acres for farming using the refreshments funds provided. Using the mixed group approach in the Palorinya refugee settlement 08 community groups accessed 13.4 acres of land for farming, individually 276 refugees accessed land as well.



Partnerships with the Private Sector to enhance access to credit access and financial services.

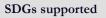
422 community groups with 10,612 members including persons with disabilities, youth, women, and men were empowered using Savings for Transformation, Enabling Rural Innovations approaches to access credit and financial services from Centenary Bank Uganda and Vision Fund to introduce their products to the project's targeted community groups. Partnerships were also established with Brac Bank Uganda, and Stanbic Bank to open cost-friendly accounts for RICE West Nile participants in Moyo and Obongi.



We now take advantage of RICE West Nile linking us to open accounts with Brac Bank to borrow more money for group farming and other investments. – Robert Amazuruku of Ujemali Vegetable Growers group in Moyo district.



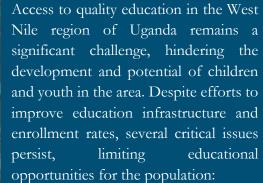
Community Education





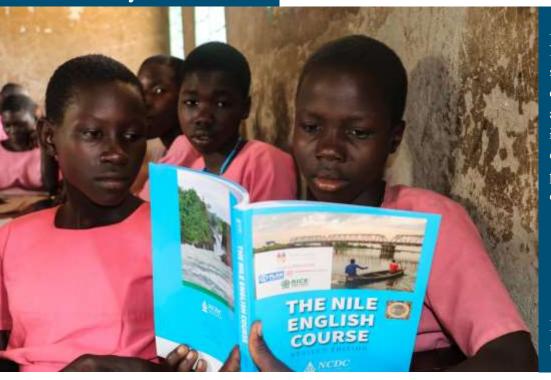






- Limited Infrastructure
- Inadequate teaching materials.
- Teacher shortages and quality.
- Limited access.

RICE West Nile in 2023, contributed towards addressing these gaps.



Learning/Instruction material for 42 Primary Schools and 1 ECCE centre in West Nile

We concentrated our interventions in districts that reported high rate of drop outs, high teenage pregnancy prevalence, among others. With the district local governments, Stromme Foundation East Africa, World Vision, Mennonite Central Committee assorted learning/instruction materials such as portable black boards, boxes of pens, books, manilla papers, groceries of chalk etc. were distributed.

Inyau Primary in Terego District, Imvepi refugee settlement is one of the 42 primary schools that benefited from the instruction and learning materials. The instructional materials have greatly improved the quality of teaching of both Mainstream and AEP.

We use the portable black boards we received to teach other children outside which reduces congestion in the classroom - Deputy Head Teacher of Inyau Primary School.

1,055 Adolescents and Youth 13 to 30 years old equipped with start-up kits after graduating from Vocational Skills Training

RICE West Nile used Bonga, and Technical Vocational Education and Training approaches to improve the self-confidence, self-esteem, and incomes for out-of-school Adolescents and youth.

This accomplishment signifies a significant investment in the empowerment and development of young people in the region. By equipping them with practical skills, these individuals now have the opportunity to pursue meaningful careers and contribute to the economic growth of their communities. Among the skills obtained include baking, liquid and bar soap making, carpentry, building and concrete practice.





1,729 Girls and Boys Mobilized to reintegrate in Primary school

With concerted efforts of stakeholders, back-to-school campaigns, close follow-up with parents, and class tracking using class monitor's tool.

Extensive counselling offered to students who are victims of early marriages/pregnancies, and lack of scholastic materials. Some of the parents have become more supportive to the children's education.

Extensive Supervision, Observation and Continuous Professional Development for Teachers and Caregivers for School Improvement

311 teachers, caregivers, and management committee members were capacitated on the abridged curriculum, gender-responsive school. Additionally, exposure visits to model schools in other districts were facilitated together with quarterly meetings for the Parents Teachers Associations and School Management Committee members. The district education offices were facilitated to supervise, monitor and observe teachers during lesson delivery and other curriculum activities. Obongi, Madi Okollo and Terego districts benefited from the interventions.



We have never seen a project in the district that supports the education department with facilitation to reach schools. This has helped us close the gaps in the school and between the school and the education department in the district. – The Inspector of Schools Obongi District



To improve retention and enrollment in primary schools, 4,022 girls and boys trained in reusable sanitary pad making. 4,868 Menstrual Hygiene Management Kits were distributed.

33 latrine stances were constructed in Obongi.







Community at the Forefront of School Feeding Program

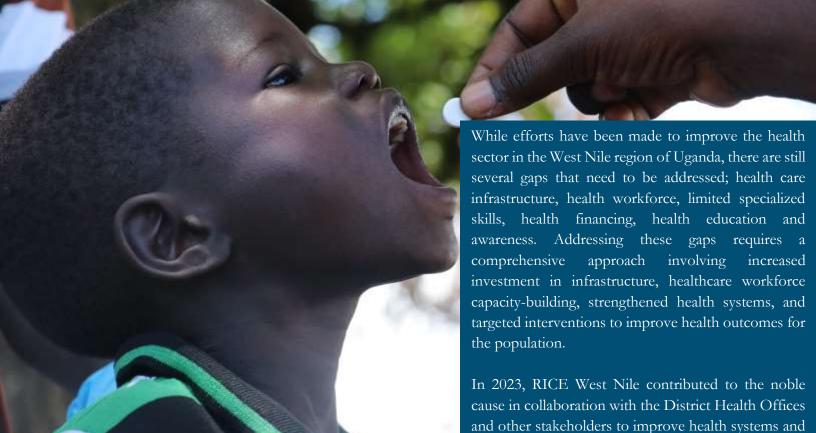
Using the cost-sharing approach, 580 (291 M, 289 F – 97% refugees) school children at Our Child ECCE centre in Obongi district were fed.

Parents willingly accepted the innovation and resorted to contributing 2kgs of maize, Ugx 1,000 for sugar, Ugx 500 for grinding and 3 pieces of firewood per child per term. This contributed to the 96% retention rate in the school and 18% increase in enrollment.

RICE West Nile Annual Report 2023

SDG supported





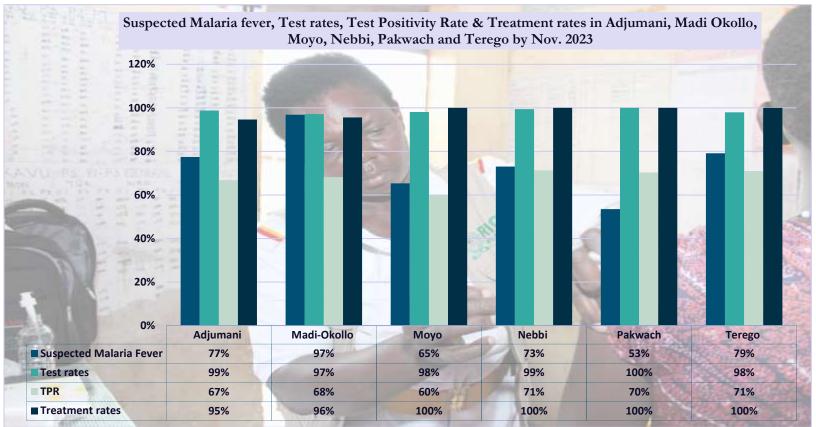
Responding to Malaria Upsurge in the West Nile Sub Region

Malaria is endemic in Uganda, and the West Nile region is no exception. Malaria upsurges in the West Nile region of Uganda have been a persistent challenge.

RICE West Nile with support from The Aids Support Organization (TASO), CHASE Africa and AMREF International used Integrated Community Case Management (ICCM), and Integrated Outreaches to treat, educate and refer 82,644 women, youth, men, refugees and host communities (57.82% female) on Family Planning, Primary Health Care, Malaria, HIV



deliver services to heard-to-reach communities.



Ms. Alice Christine, a 25-year-old Community health Volunteer and a mother of $1\frac{1}{2}$ year old baby from Odruaku Village, Kwili Parish in Rigbo Sub County is a role model of Family Planning in her community.

I target women in smaller numbers because meeting many of them at once may have some misconceptions about Family Planning and end up discouraging even those who are interested in receiving the methods. Then I ask them to tell me what they know about FP. After hearing all the positive and negative thoughts and perceptions that they have concerning Family planning, I then educate them. I am happy Women I have talked to are taking family planning seriously now.

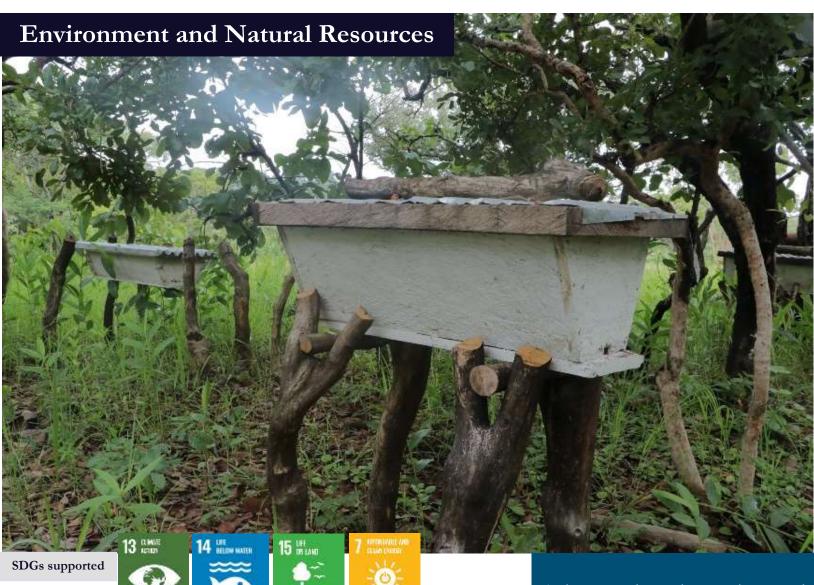


HIV Testing Care and Treatment

220 HIV and Tuberculosis clients were followed up and brought back on care. 153 further received home-based services. 1,764 were screened for TB using moonlight testing, contact tracing, and index client approaches in Terego and Arua districts.

607 women and men aged 50+ years were tested for HIV and only 9 were got positive and enrolled on care.

265 pregnant mothers in the first trimester were linked to health facilities for Antenatal Care.



As in many other regions, environmental degradation in West Nile has various dimensions and impacts. Some key forms of environmental degradation in West Nile include deforestation, soil erosion, water pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change effects.

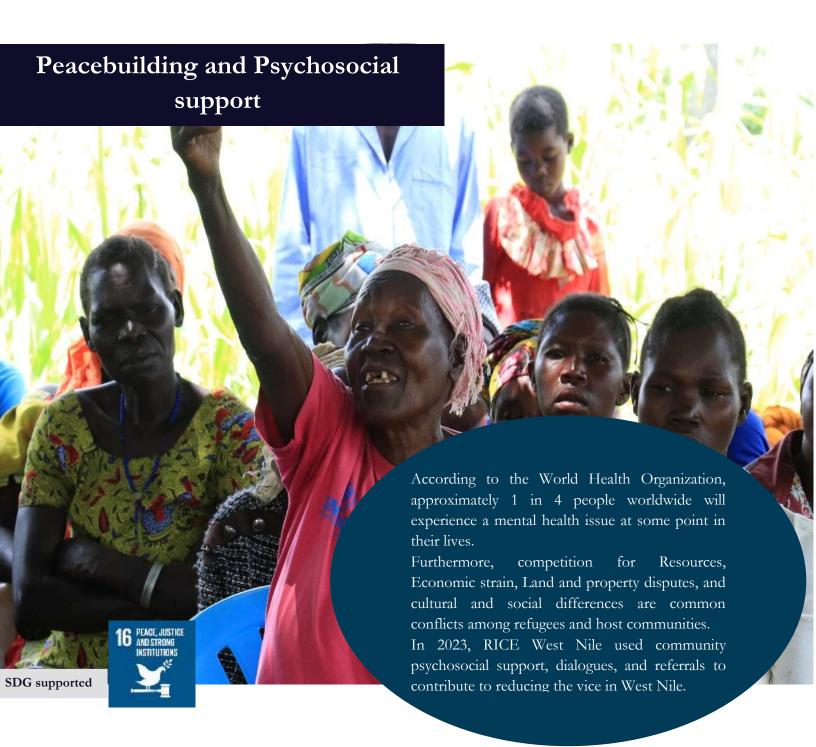
Using the Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) approach RICE West Nile preserved woodlots, farms and grazing land of 175 acres in Moyo and Obongi districts. For income generation for the Savings and Development Clusters members, 10 Apiary demonstration sites were established with 58 Kenya Top Bar bee hives.



Community Tree Management

Additionally, in 2023, using the community-managed tree raising and management approach 6,374 tree seedlings were raised and managed. Four (4) Parish Environment Committees (20 members (4 F, 16 M), Beach Management Unit (BMU – 18 in number) were empowered to construct improved energy-saving cookstoves, Agroforestry, Community Tree Nursery Management, and Sensitization on sustainable fishing.

Advocacy by adolescents, youth, women, and men on environmental conservation such as bush burning, and tree planting as a commitment Itula Sub County disseminated the sub-county bylaws on bush burning.



Refugees and the host community members received counselling individually and at the group level from trained counsellors. The most common cases handled include gender-based violence, drug abuse, poverty, and medical conditions among others. 111 clients were referred to other actors such as Local Government, Non-Governmental Organizations among others. The organisation also provided material support to 05 adolescents.

Dialogues have proven to be an effective mediation method for the different communities. Across West Nile over 15,000 people dialogued on malaria prevention, peaceful coexistence, access, and sharing of natural resources among others.

23 (3 F, 20 M) juveniles were resettled from Giligili Remand Home in Arua City with their families across West Nile for crimes of theft, defilement, and drug and substance abuse.

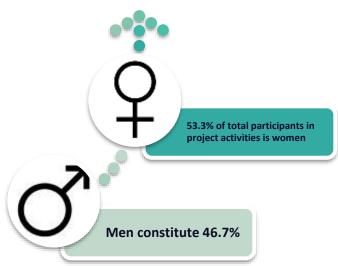


Gender Inclusion.

RICE West Nile recognizes gender relations and inequalities are fundamental causes of poverty in hard-to-reach communities and therefore strives to reduce these inequalities by intentionally targeting women in the design of interventions. We recognize that 60% of our project participants have to be women. Activities have been designed to deliberately engage the women in the decision-making process, taking active roles in leadership at group and community levels. A dedicated focal person is in place to support the organization's gender policy. Actions such as giving 10% free for female nominees were used in the SUPREME project during the disbursement of the Enterprise Development Grant.

Disability Inclusion.

RICE West Nile works for and with persons with disabilities. The institution within the period focused on enhancing the staff capacity in disability inclusion through partnerships with AWO International, and CIVFUND among others. The monitoring system appreciates keeping



data on persons with disabilities who constitute 02% of the total participants (108, 433). Inclusive community participation is another approach used in Education, Resilient Livelihood, Community Health, Environment and Natural Resources, Peacebuilding and Psychosocial Support areas.

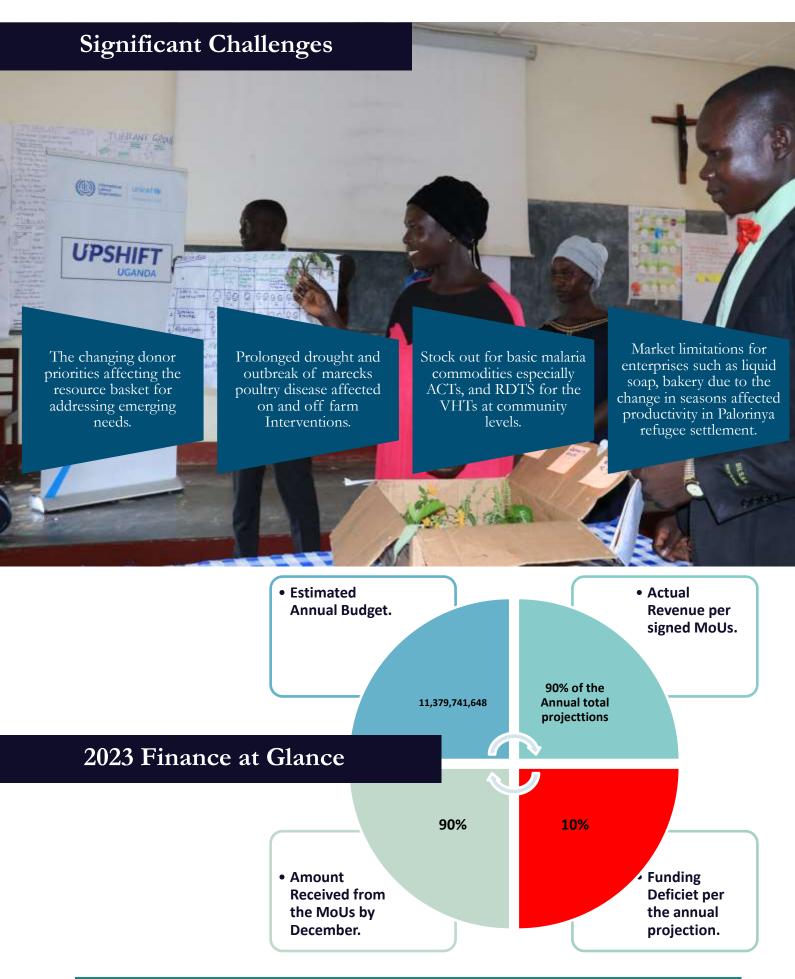
Savings for Transformation.

We believe that if targeted community members brought together in social groups are introduced to the basics of savings, they will develop, transform, and sustain the project results. Therefore, Ugx 1,879,571,700 (467,555.1 Euros) was saved by different project participants in all the operation areas. These savings are used for developmental purposes. RICE West Nile staff additionally save under a guided framework 'Staff Savings Scheme' for personal development.

Safeguarding.

At RICE West Nile, we believe everyone has a right to live free from Sexual Harassment, Exploitation, and Abuse (SEAH), and that no child or adult at risk should be subjected to abuse of any form. We recognize that there is unequal power between RICE West Nile Employees and Related Personnel and the people we partner and work with throughout our programs or projects, and also between people within our organization. Within the period, the management and partners continuously refresh the knowledge of the staff and volunteers as well as encourage compulsory signing safeguarding of commitments.





Lives We Changed

Living in Denial Almost Cost My Life

I used to acknowledge my wife's HIV negative result as my personal result" said Asiku Obitre.



This is the story of 40-year-old, Asiku Obitre from Aribio village, Otumbari Parish under Bileafe H/C III in Terego district. He used to rely on his wife's HIV test results to know his results until he fell sick and almost died. While doing petty jobs in Kampala, Asiku used to believe that he was also HIV negative when his wife tested negative not until his third wife tested positive. When the third wife informed him that she tested positive during her 1st ANC visit, he rubbished it and said he didn't know where she got her HIV from. 'For me I'm okay, I don't know where you got your sickness from," said Asiku in denial of the results when his

wife informed him from the village in 2019 while he was in Kampala that she tested HIV positive.

It wasn't until January 2022 that Asiku also tested HIV positive when he visited the facility; he would get sick every month. Even after testing positive, Asiku refused to admit his status and rejected the drugs that he was given. Eight months later, Asiku became very weak, thin and bedridden at death point until his wife (Alitiru Ketty) who is also on care had to call for help from the facility i.e. Bileafe H/C III where our LRA (Abiriga Christopher) rescued him by bringing his ART and removed his blood for more investigations (blood for CD4 count test). When declaring the result to him, the LRA counselled him and explained what awaits him if he continues to live in denial because he has a low CD4 count (less than 200). "At that time, it was a bad sign that I may probably pack and go (die) and I had to listen to Christopher. I give my appreciation to RICE West Nile for bringing us such a person who goes up to our poor homes to rescue our life," said Asiku.

Within every woman lies a great need to nurture those around them!

In Metu sub-county, Pameri Parish 42-year-old Chandia Agnes, a mother of four (4) children tailors for a living. Agnes started her business of sowing school uniforms and kitenges in 2019, but since then Agnes has been unable to expand his business to a state where she can train other women in her community which has been her dream. Besides her dream to transform the women in her community, her children's education and health well-being have never gone haywire.

Since the start of her business in 2019, she has never received any support from any institution or program. This only made it a hard pill to swallow for her when it comes to achieving her dreams. She lacked training materials, space for training, and tailoring machines to skill other women.

In July 2020, Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile with funding from the European Union started implementing an economic empowerment consortium project with SNV, ZoA and World

Vision titled 'Security, Protection and Economic Empowerment in Northern Uganda'. Moyo and Obongi districts were the target districts for the project under RICE West Nile, In the two districts, the project is to be implemented in the four sub-counties which include, Lefori, Moyo, Palorinya and Metu sub-county. One of the approaches used is economic stimulus where Enterprise Development Grants are awarded to successful community members in organized project groups.



Agnes on a normal day in her business premises. Photo Credit: Apollo Opoi – CA RICE West Nile.

In 2022, during the selection of members to compete for the grant Agnes emerged the successful based on nominations by her group members. In the same year, Agnes was trained in business planning and management. "I submitted a business plan for the tailoring which was marked by district officials and I was successful among the 254 participants who applied. I planned to expand the shop so that I can share my skills with other women" – Agnes Explains.

"After three (3) weeks I received 5,061,000/= (€ 1,258.9) through the bank. I was very happy; I couldn't believe this was happening to me." – Agnes Smiles. Agnes has bought two tailoring machines, rented a bigger room and bought more materials. She started attracting institutions to make uniforms, and so far, 3 schools have given her a contract to supply them with uniforms including one secondary school. The value of these contracts is worth 2,000,000 (€ 497.5) which would take her a whole year to earn from the business in its earlier state. As she started getting more orders, she brought on board 3 of her SDC (group) members for the training. She then added one (1) more machine to make them three (1) to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of her training. More women have approached her to train them, this gives her joy because "I feel I am uplifting other women."

Sometimes the workload makes her work challenging, training people to meet clients' demands. Agnes has decided to hire the three (3) women she trained to work for her when she receives orders from the schools. She pays them $5{,}000/=({\,}^{\circ}{\,}1.2)$ per pair of uniforms sowed. According to her, this enabled the three women to pay school fees for their children, and buy the basic needs such as soap, and sugar for their households.

Her monthly profits have increased from 100,000/= (€ 24.8) to 460,000/= (€ 114.4) making it very easy for her to share household responsibilities with her children. According to her, she always relied on her husband to pay school fees, buy uniforms, and provide medical care for their children. This sometimes offended her husband and often caused problems in their relationship. All this is now history. "It has earned me respect from my husband our relationship has improved since I now contribute to the family basket." – concludes Agnes.



BOD



Our board members are the driving force behind our mission to kindle and facilitate a people led and sustained protection of nature and wellbeing of humanity.

STAFF



Our greatest asset is our dedicated team. Through ongoing trainings, mentorship & professional growth initiatives, we're investing in the continuous learning & advancement of our employees.

Community Structures



We deliver grassroots programs i.e. capacity building for grassroots structures and leaders in some of the hard to reach and underserved. From Village Health Teams (VHTs) to individuals and groups, these grassroots organizations are the backbone of our outreach efforts, helping us bridge the gap and connect with community members where they are.



Hon. Anite Evelyn presented two prestigious awards to the dedicated staff of RICE West Nile; namely the Climate Action and Education and Youth Empowerment CBO in December 2023 by the esteemed West Nile Quality Brands Awards.



In November 2023, a collaborative monitoring visit took place under the Malaria Response Project, generously supported by TASO. This visit brought together members of the board, management team, and local government officials for a comprehensive assessment of our efforts.





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