



**RICE
WEST NILE**
Striving for Self Reliance

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



P.O Box 481 Arua City – Uganda

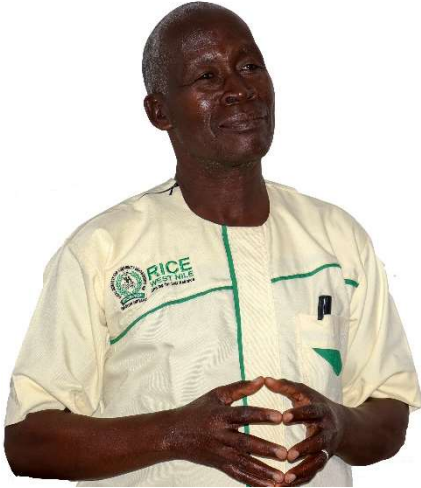
Plot 16 Block Awudele Crescent, Weatherhead Lane-Odaa Road

T: +256 393 238163 | M: +256 773 472234, +256 702 857349

E: jambo@ricewestnile.org | ricewestniles@gmail.com

W: www.ricewestnile.org

REMARK FROM OUR BOARD CHAIRPERSON



We celebrate another year of remarkable achievements at RICE West Nile. Our success is rooted in strong financial stewardship, effective program management, and the unwavering dedication of our team. Despite challenges, we have remained committed to delivering on our strategic priorities as outlined in the 2024 annual work plan.

This year, we made significant strides in empowering communities through resilient livelihoods, access to care, protection against child-related abuse, and dignified employment opportunities for young people. These achievements reflect the collective efforts of our dedicated Board of Directors, staff members, and invaluable partners.

RICE West Nile continues to be a model for local organizations, strengthening collaboration with governments and non-state actors to improve the lives of vulnerable communities.

However, our journey is not without challenges, particularly in mobilizing resources to sustain and expand our development initiatives. This calls for concerted efforts to secure both local and international funding to enhance our impact on Uganda's development agenda. We remain deeply grateful to the Government of Uganda and the respective district and lower local governments we work with.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our esteemed development partners, including the Royal Danish Embassy (RDE), AWO International, Community Health and Sustainable Environment (CHASE) Africa, American Jewish World Service (AJWS), The European Union (EU), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), The AIDS Support Organization (TASO), Strømme Foundation, Infectious Disease Institute (IDI), International Labour Organization (ILO), The Fund for Global Human Rights, War Child, and the Ministry of Water and Environment. Your unwavering support, generosity, and commitment have been the driving force behind our success. We deeply appreciate your invaluable contributions in empowering communities and fostering sustainable development.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to scaling up successful projects, investing in technology, strengthening institutional capacity, and empowering women and youth. Together, let us continue striving for a more sustainable, inclusive, and empowered society.

Can. Dralega Onesmus
Chairperson, Board of Directors
RICE West Nile.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2024 marked the final year of our **Strategic Plan (2020–2024)** implementation, guiding RICE West Nile in promoting resilient livelihoods, community health, education, environmental conservation, governance and peace. We are humbled to report another year of impactful achievements aligned with our mission.

This year, we directly reached **73,748 (46,889 female, 26,859 male; 64% female, 36% male) people**, with **women** comprising **63.58%**, reinforcing our commitment to gender inclusion. As we celebrate 20 years of service, we continue to cultivate strategic partnerships with development partners, government agencies, and private sector actors, expanding our reach and maximizing impact.



We enhanced financial access through partnerships with Vision Fund and Centenary Bank, while collaborations with agro-input dealers improved access to farm inputs and extension services, boosting agricultural productivity. Our efforts to establish market linkages and promote value addition have also led to increased incomes for farmers.

Youth empowerment remained a priority, with **1,303 young people (452 male, 851 female)** trained, graduated, and equipped with start-up kits to launch their businesses, fostering self-reliance and economic resilience.

In response to rising health challenges in West Nile, we partnered with health institutions in Terego, Madi Okollo, Yumbe, Nebbi, and Pakwach districts to monitor malaria commodity stock levels, strengthen health teams, promote family planning, expand HIV/AIDS treatment and care, and support Integrated Community Case Management (ICCM) services, significantly improving healthcare access.

Despite challenges such as funding constraints, political shifts, climate change, and limited farmland due to the refugee influx, we adapted strategically, strengthened partnerships, and optimized resources to sustain progress.

These successes reflect the dedication of our staff, guidance from our Board of Directors, and unwavering support from our partners and stakeholders including the communities we serve. As we move forward, we remain committed to driving sustainable impact, fostering resilience, and empowering communities for a brighter future.

Mr. Pax Sakari
Executive Director
RICE West Nile.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AGYW	Adolescent Girls and Young Women
ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
CBTs	Community Based Trainers
DIT	Directorate of Industrial Training
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
FMNR	Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration
FP	Family Planning
FSL	Food Security and Livelihood
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICCM	Integrated Community Case Management
KP	Key Population
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PTA	Parents and Teachers Association
PWD	Persons With Disability
RDE	Royal Danish Embassy
RICE West Nile	Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile
SDCs	Saving Development Clusters
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SFG	Savings and Farmer Groups
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
SUPREME	Security Protection and Economic Empowerment
TASO	The Aids Support Organization
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.
UGX	Ugandan Shillings
USD	United States Dollar
VHT	Village Health Teams
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association

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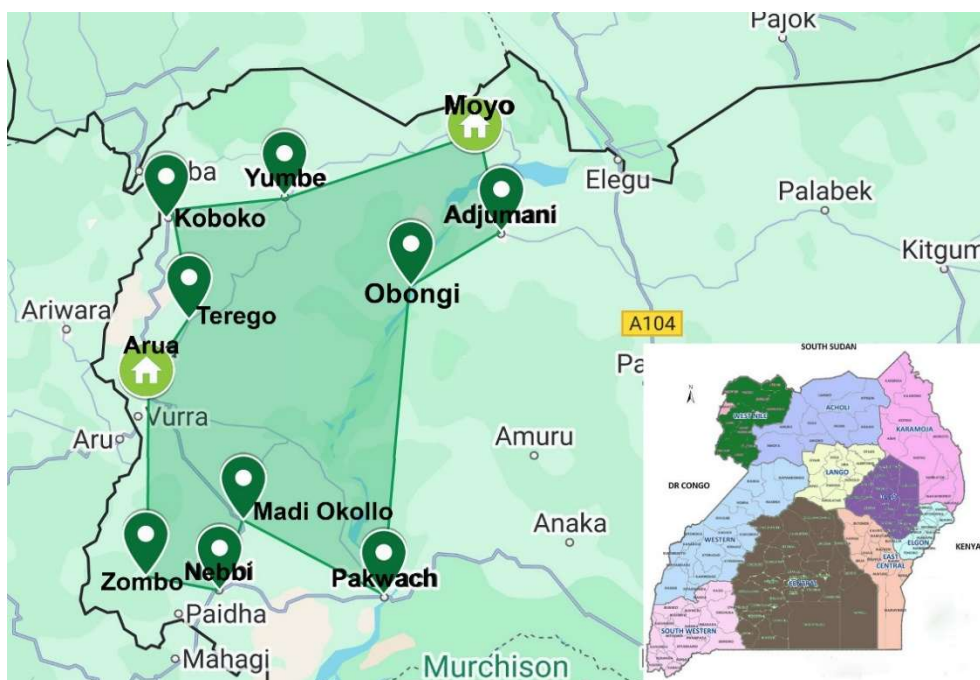
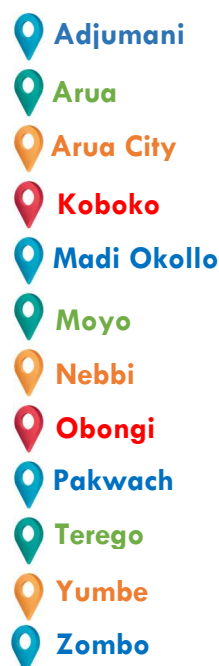
WHO WE ARE

Over the years, RICE West Nile has evolved into a leading indigenous NGO with mandate to operate nationwide. Headquartered in Arua City, we coordinate programs through strategic offices in Moyo, Bidibidi Refugee Settlement (OPM Base Camp), Lobule Sub County in Koboko District and Imvepi Refugee Settlement (OPM Base Camp).

With a footprint across 12 districts in the West Nile sub-region, RICE West Nile remains committed to driving impactful change. Additionally, we extend vital support to refugee and host communities in five settlements: Palorinya, Imvepi, Lobule, Bidibidi, and Rhino Camp, ensuring access to essential services for those in need.



OUR FOOTPRINT



DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS



ROYAL DANISH EMBASSY
Kampala



Ambasáid na hÉireann
Embassy of Ireland



Kingdom of the Netherlands



Sweden
Sverige



Funded by
the European Union



International
Labour
Organization



Community, Health & Sustainable Development



StrømmeFoundation
FIGHTING POVERTY



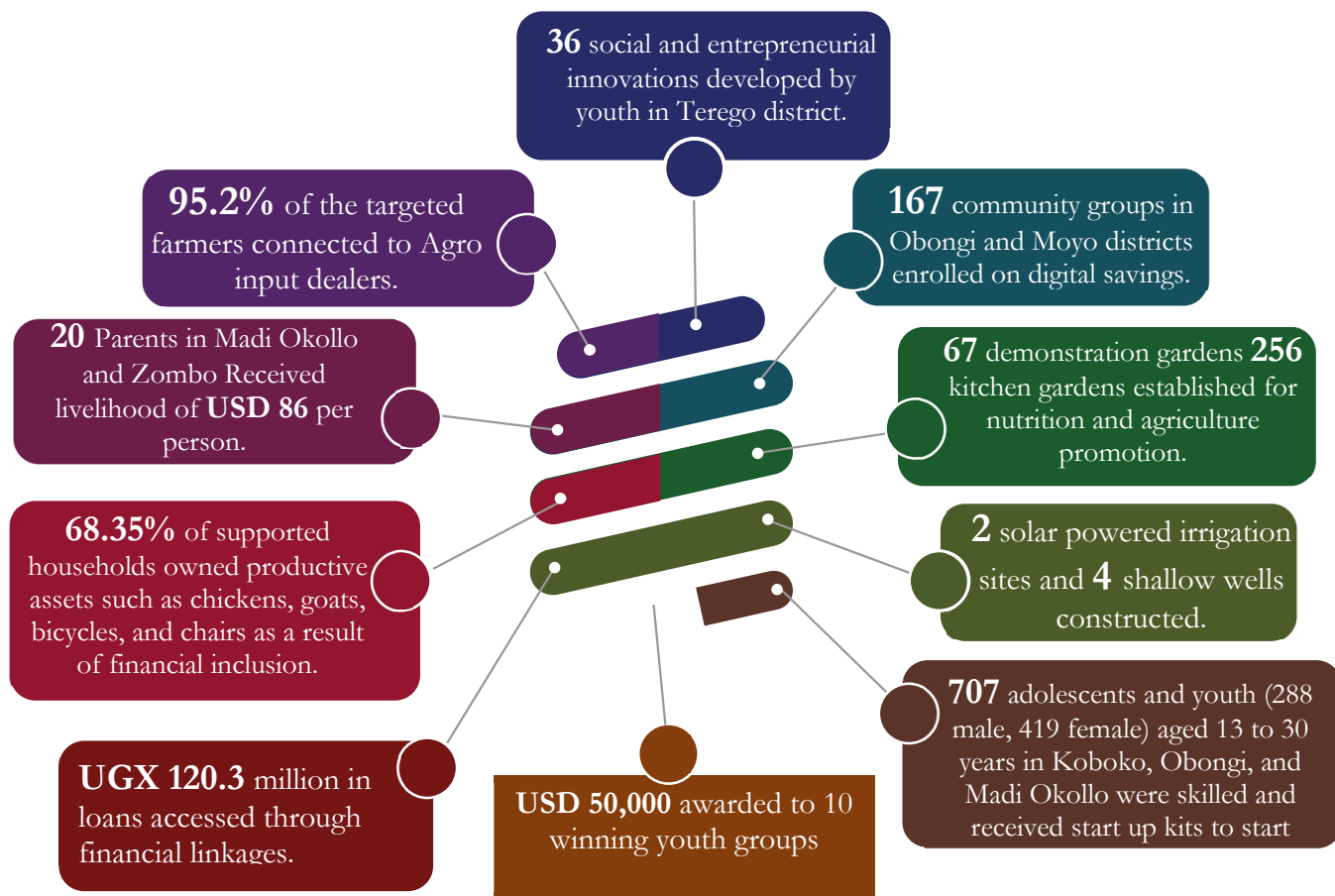
giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

CONSORTIUM PARTNERS

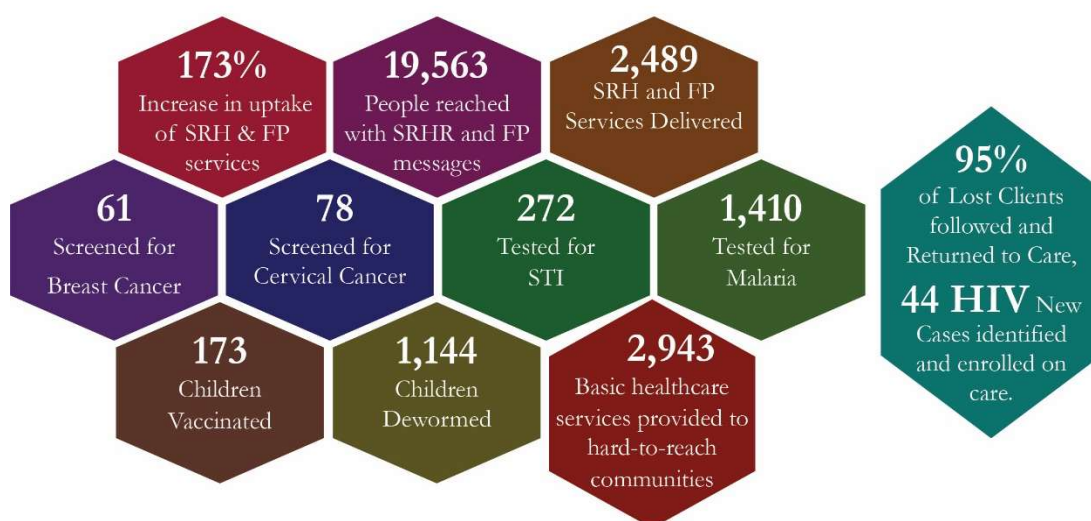


CELEBRATING OUR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

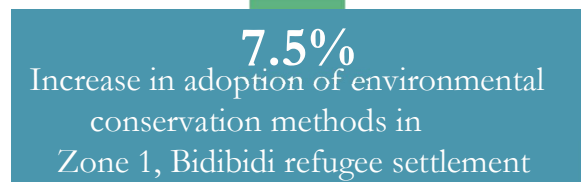
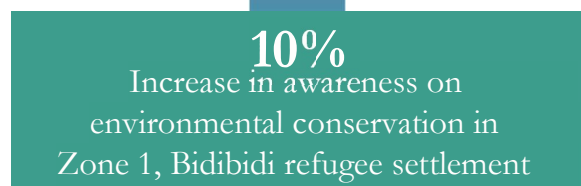
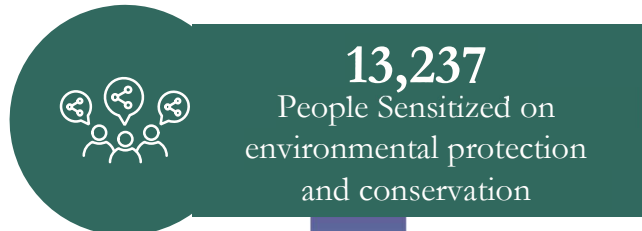
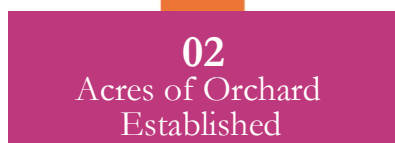
RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS



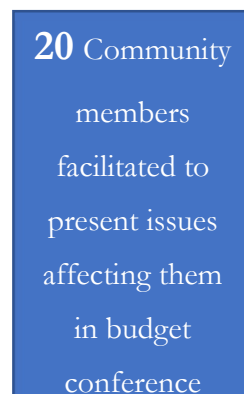
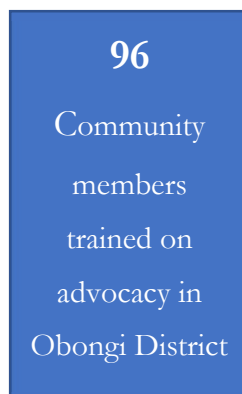
COMMUNITY HEALTH



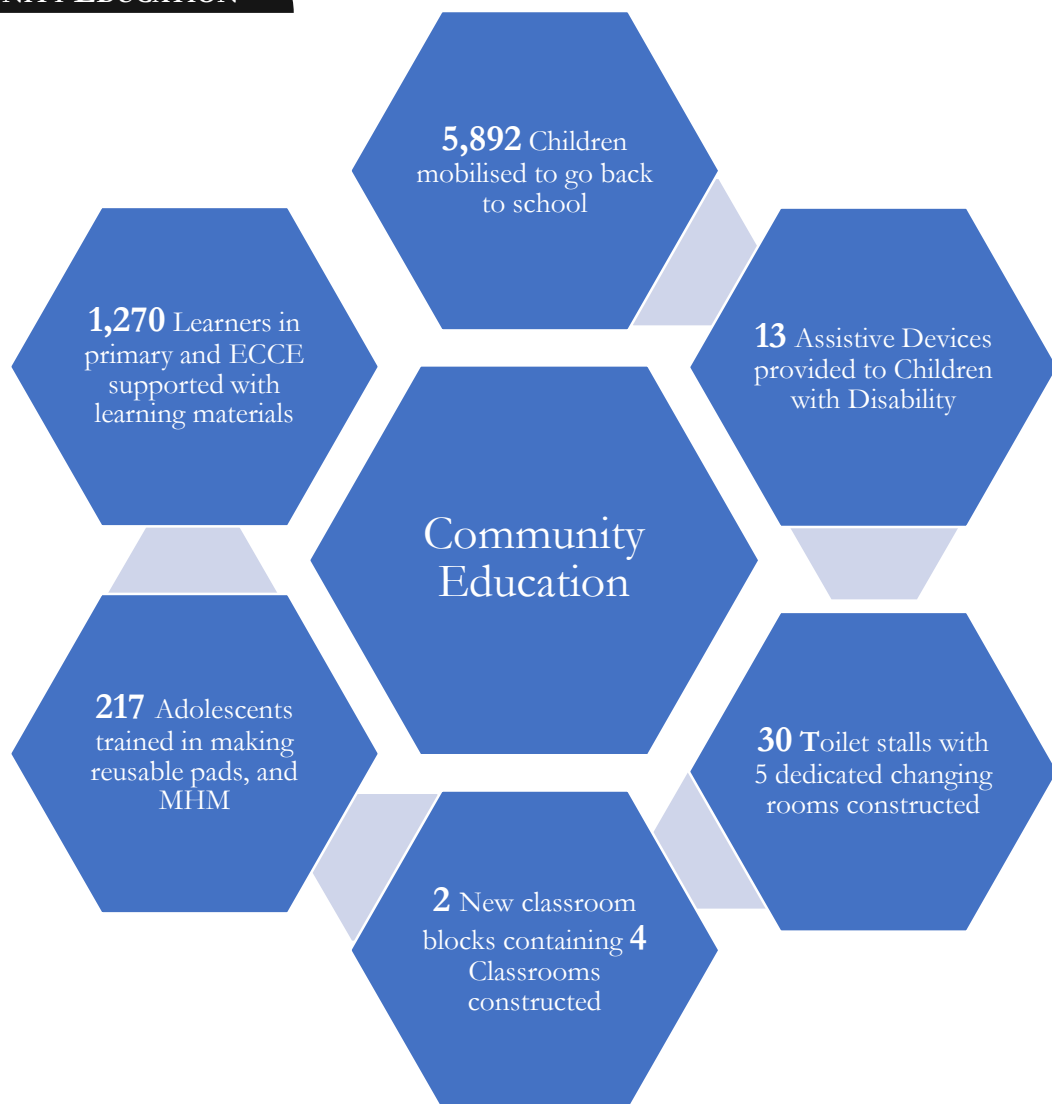
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES



GOVERNANCE AND PEACE

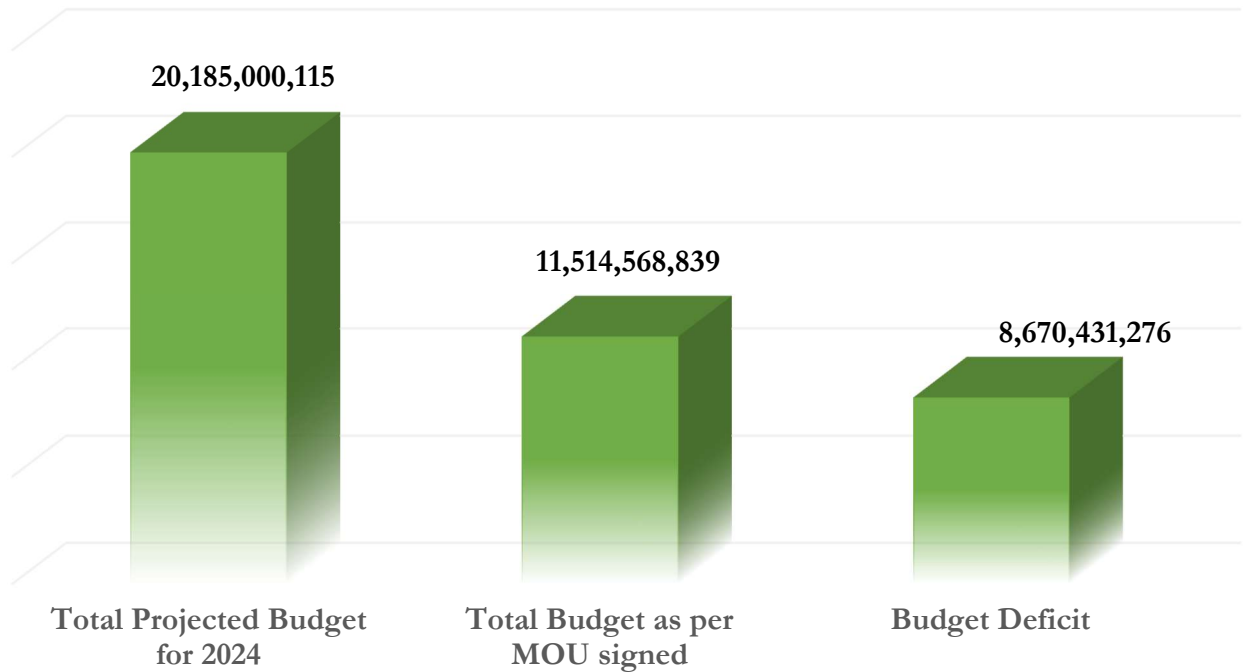


COMMUNITY EDUCATION

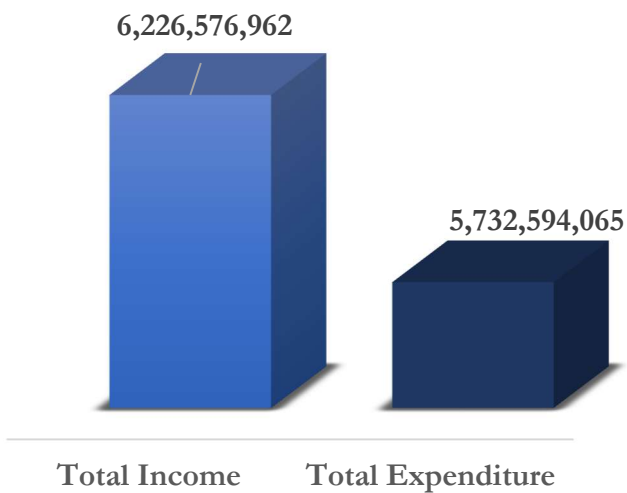


FINANCE AT GLANCE

AMOUNT IN UGX



INCOME AND EXPENDITURE



OVERALL BURN RATE



Note: SDGs supported are SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 2: Zero Hunger, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic growth

A.1. ACCESS TO CREDIT AND AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT

In 2024, significant progress was made in improving access to credit and agricultural resources for community groups, empowering members to grow their businesses and enhance agricultural productivity.

LOANS DISBURSED: A total of **130 community groups** received over **UGX 120.3 million** (*approximately USD 32,861.1*) in loans from Vision Fund. This financial support greatly improved access to credit for group members, enabling them to invest in their livelihoods and expand their economic activities. Notably, the Amengwiku community group in Moyo District received a loan of **UGX 10 million**, which they used to start businesses and expand their farming activities, demonstrating the transformative power of access to credit.

AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT: In addition to the loans, approximately **95.2% of the farmer group members** were connected with suppliers of essential agricultural inputs, including seeds and farm tools. This support has played a crucial role in enhancing agricultural productivity, allowing community members to improve their farming practices and achieve better yields, thus increasing their income-generating potential.

A.2. DIVERSIFIED LIVELIHOODS FOR HOUSEHOLDS



Figure 1: RICE West Nile in collaboration with Arua District officials handing over goats to group members in Arua District.

Photo Credit: Apollo Opoi – Comms Asst.

To strengthen household resilience to climate change shocks, RICE West Nile promotes both on-and off-farm enterprises. In total, **14 Groups** in Arua City, Arua District, Terego District, and Madi Okollo District were supported by RICE West Nile to establish off-farm enterprises. The support includes training on business development and distribution of goats, two-week-old chickens, beehives, and soap-making materials. These initiatives have helped

diversify the livelihoods of 373 members (194 male, 179 female). For instance, the group that was supported with chicken generated **UGX 800,000** (*approximately USD 222.2*) from the sale of these chickens, which was reinvested into group savings. This has increased the group's capital base,

improving access to loans and promoting financial inclusion. By the end of 2024, **68.35% of the supported households** owned productive assets such as chickens, goats, bicycles, and chairs.

Additionally, a youth group in Arua City was supported in establishing a fish pond (aquaculture) with 2,000 fingerlings of tilapia and catfish that would be ready for harvest in early 2025. Furthermore, 20 parents of reintegrated girls received livelihood support worth UGX 300,000 (approximately USD 83.3) to start income-generating activities. This initiative aims to facilitate the girls' re-entry into primary school while ensuring sustainable access to resources for the families beyond the project's duration to further support secondary education for the reintegrated girls.



Figure 2: Mungueconi Fish Farming Group in Arua District feeding fingerlings.
Photo Credit: Apollo Opoi – Comms Asst.

A.3. IMPROVED FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY



Figure 3: Angili Women Farmers Group harvesting greens from their demonstration garden in Lobule Sub County Koboko District.

A total of **67 demonstration gardens were established** to teach community groups and school pupils good agronomic practices, alongside **256 kitchen gardens** aimed at promoting household nutrition. These kitchen gardens produced crops like cowpeas, amaranths, cabbage, onions, and tomatoes. The support from RICE West Nile

came in form of farm tools, inputs, and extension services. One participant shared how the variety of vegetable crops they grew not only improved farming practices but also generated income through crop sales, *"We were able to grow a variety of vegetable crops and sell them at reasonable prices, which helped us earn income. Farming activities were improved, and we earned good income."* She explained.

Through these initiatives, RICE West Nile has enhanced household diets by promoting vegetable cultivation and nutrition education. The supported community members reported that practices such as row planting, and improved crop management have resulted in higher yields, knowledge of better agricultural practices, and increased income from crop sales, ultimately boosting household income security. **74% of the targeted group members** consumed at least three nutritious foods. Of this 74%, **75.8% were female and 71.4% were male**. Additionally, **77.3% were members of the host community, while 68.9% were refugees**.

A.4. WATER FOR PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY PROMOTED



Figure 4: Water for Production Site in Lobule Sub County Koboko District.

In response to the challenges of climate change, four shallow wells and two solar-powered irrigation systems were installed on a combined 4.5-acre plot in Yumbe, Koboko, and Obongi districts as part of water-for-production initiative. These sites demonstrated three irrigation methods: sprinkler, horse pipe, and drip irrigation. Despite the innovative setup, by the end of the year, only **7% of the targeted population** was

utilizing the site for vegetable cultivation. This was because the site is located quite distant from the groups and they found it difficult to access it. In Koboko District, the initiative proved fruitful, with over **UGX 2,000,000** (*approximately USD 555.5*) earned in a single season from the sale of vegetables like eggplant.

A.5. AGRO-FORESTRY PROMOTED THROUGH THE MODEL FARMER APPROACH



Figure 5: A refugee Role Model Farmer in Bidi Bidi managing disease in his rented garden. Photo by Apollo Opoi

In Yumbe District, eight model farmers (six male, two female) were supported to promote Agro-forestry, each on one-acre plots where they cultivated marketable crops such as rice, cassava, and maize. In addition to these crops, the farmers were provided with tree seedlings, including White teak (*Gmelina arborea*), Brown teak (*Tectona grandis*), Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), A'buluko (*Afzelia africana*), Mahogany (*Khaya*

anthotheca), Jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*), and Avocado (*Persea americana*), to integrate sustainable forestry practices into their agricultural enterprises. This initiative aims to enhance both agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability.

A.6. INNOVATIONS AND YOUTH SKILLING TO ADDRESS COMMUNITY CHALLENGES



Figure 6: Youth group demonstrating innovative vertical vegetable growing using waste plastic products in Imvepi refugee settlement. Photo by Apollo Opoi

36 youth groups with promising innovations were provided with a seed fund of USD 100 to develop a prototype of their innovation. These groups, totaling 191 youth (95 refugees, 96 nationals; 91 males, 100 female), were organized into teams of five members to develop social-entrepreneurial innovations addressing

community challenges such as youth unemployment, poor nutrition, and high school dropout rates among girls. Their innovations included fish farming, vermiculture, pesticide and fungicide production, energy-saving stove manufacturing, reusable sanitary pad production, composite toilet construction, and hygiene item production like bar soap. One group, Hope to Reach sanitary-making youth group, generated **UGX 639,000** (*approximately USD 177.5*) in just one month from their prototype.

In addition, a **USD 5,000 grant** was awarded to ten winning youth groups, consisting of fifty members (**23 female, 27 male**), after participating in a Youth Summit in Kampala. These groups developed innovations such as fish farming, greenhouse vegetable farming, briquette and energy stove making, and recycling plastic waste into crafts. By the end of the program, their average **monthly income increased from UGX 91,453 (USD 24.54) to UGX 212,048 (USD 56.90)**, with many using their earnings for education and household expenses. All ten groups registered their businesses.

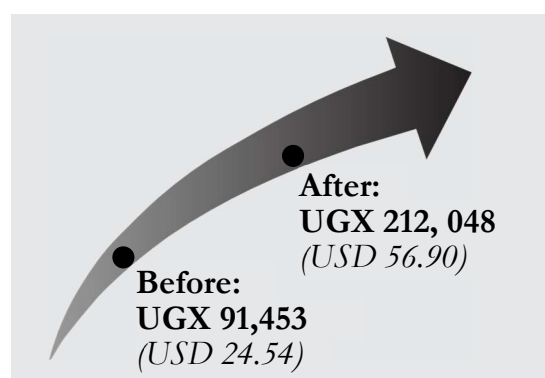




Figure 7: Some staff of RICE West Nile learning vertical vegetable growing innovative solutions at the Office. Photo by Apollo Opoi land.

Additionally, the Project Officers for Resilient Livelihood demonstrated innovative technologies for growing vegetables in urban setting at RICE West Nile Head Office in Arua City. This was aimed at enhancing the knowledge of staff and guests on growing high-value vegetables on small piece of

A.7. DIGITAL LITERACY FOR THE COMMUNITY GROUPS



Figure 8: Mr. Cadribo Sunday (on the right) a Board Member monitoring the digital saving App with SDC in Moyo District.

RICE West Nile successfully digitalized the savings records of 167 community groups in Obongi and Moyo districts. Using a cost-sharing approach, RICE



West Nile contributed 60%, while the groups provided 40% to acquire smartphones for migrating their savings records to the

DreamSave Application. This digitalization enables

Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) to build a transactional history, which can serve as collateral for financial institutions to offer digital credit to members. Additionally, the process has promoted transparency, as each member now receives SMS notifications about their savings records, enhancing accountability within the groups.

B COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Note: SDG supported is SDG 4: Quality Education

Throughout the year, significant progress was made in enhancing the accessibility and quality of education for children, especially those from vulnerable groups, in West Nile. Key outcomes achieved include:

B.1 ASSISTIVE DEVICES PROVIDED FOR CHILDREN WITH PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS

A total of **13 children (6 male and 7 female)** with physical impairments were provided with assistive devices such as wheelchairs, braille materials, and crutches. This support significantly improved their mobility, accessibility, and retention in school, allowing them to participate more effectively in their education.

B.2 IMPROVED SANITATION AND MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT



Figure 9: Boys and girls from Belameling Primary School in Palorinya Refugee Settlement during a training on making reusable pads

In line with efforts to promote gender-responsive education, **6 primary schools** had their sanitary facilities upgraded. This included the construction of **30 toilet stalls** with **5 dedicated changing rooms** for girls, and the installation of incinerators for the safe disposal of menstrual hygiene products, benefiting adolescent girls and ensuring a better

menstrual hygiene management environment in the supported schools. Additionally, **217 (81 boys and 136 girls)** were trained in making reusable pads, producing liquid soap and managing menstrual hygiene.

B.3 SCHOLASTIC MATERIAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS



Figure 10: Distributing scholastic materials to Obongi Primary School in Obongi District.

A total of **1,270 learners** in both primary and ECCE were supported with essential learning materials, including scholastic supplies, participation in the school feeding program, and psychosocial support services. This holistic approach reduced barriers to learning and improved the overall well-being of learners.

B.4 IMPROVED SAFETY OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

To improve the learning environment, **212 primary school learners benefited** from the construction of **2 new classroom blocks containing 4 classrooms**. Additionally, **136 new chairs** were provided for children in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), ensuring better comfort and learning conditions. **1,463 children (485 male and 978 female)** were sensitized on inclusive and gender-responsive schools including 43 teachers from Obongi trained. The focus was on treating everyone equally in the school setting. To strengthen the school systems

229 Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) members were trained and facilitated to meet termly to discuss school improvement plans.

B.5 BACK-TO-SCHOOL MOBILIZATION



Figure 11: DEO Obongi District and OPM Palorinya Refugee Settlement during a Back-to-school radio campaign.

As part of a strategy to improve school enrolment, a total of 5,892 children (3,421 refugees and 2,471 host community members) were mobilised to go back to school. This initiative played a key role in boosting school attendance, especially at the beginning of each term and reinforcing the roles of parents and caregivers in educating their

The back-to-school campaigns were complemented by empowering 4,789 parents on good parenting skills. This improved the attitudes of the parents making them more supportive of their children. For instance; 70.2% of the parents demonstrated supportive attitudes towards improving enrolment and retention among girlchildren in primary schools to prevent teenage pregnancy as they were able to provide basic scholastic materials for the learners, follow up the learners in school and spare discussion time for these children.

B.6 EMPLOYABLE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

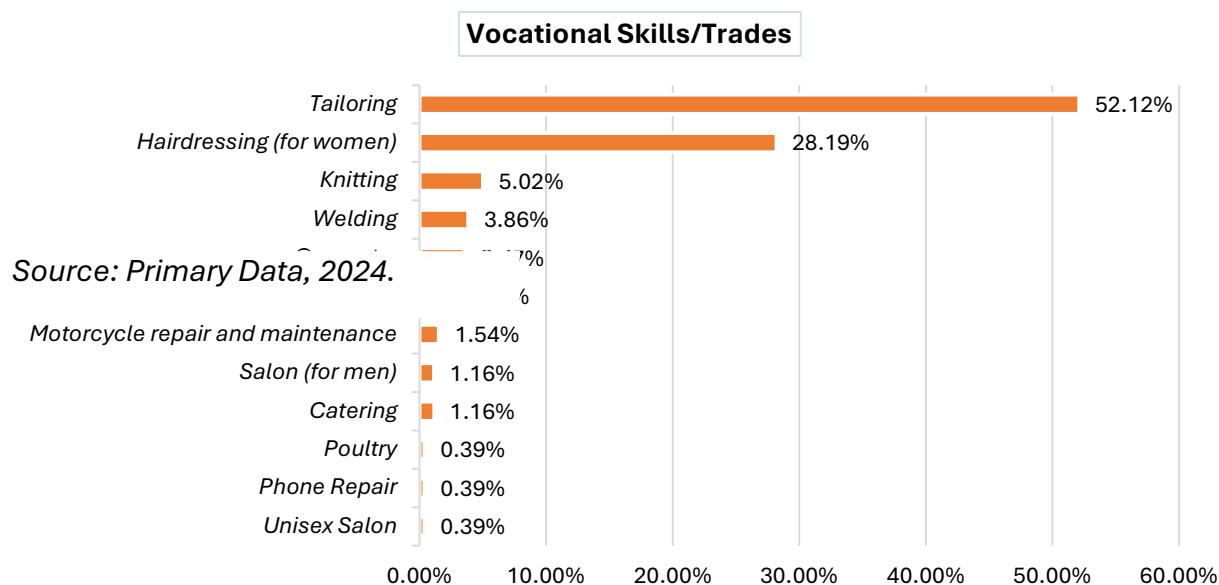


Figure 12: A skills development beneficiary at her shop in Point J Imvepi Refugee Settlement.
Photo Credit: Apollo Opoi – Comms Asst.

Furthermore, 1,303 adolescents and youth (452 male, 851 female) aged 13 to 30 years in Koboko, Obongi, and Madi Okollo districts received startup kits after completing 6-9 months of training in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and business management.

Additionally, 126 young people sat for the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT)

certification. The majority of trainees focused on tailoring, while others specialized in trades such as welding, hairdressing, bakery, and knitting. These programs have enabled the youth to acquire skills that foster self-reliance and income generation, contributing to sustainable livelihoods.



C COMMUNITY HEALTH

C.1 HIV PREVENTION AND CARE SERVICES

This year, significant strides were made in HIV prevention and care interventions, particularly through improved follow-up and testing initiatives:

CLIENT RETENTION AND RETURN-TO-CARE: A total of 928 previously lost clients were successfully followed up, with 95% returning to care, demonstrating a high level of engagement and commitment to continued treatment.



Figure 13: A client restocking her HIV treatment.
Photo Credit: Apollo Opoi – Comms Asst.

HIV TESTING AND CARE: Through index client testing in Terego District and outreach among key populations (KPs) in Arua District, 1,496 individuals were tested for HIV. This led to the identification of 44 HIV-positive clients, resulting in a yield rate of 2.9%. These newly identified individuals were promptly enrolled on antiretroviral therapy (ART), supporting the broader goal of achieving the UNAIDS

95:95:95 targets by improving awareness of HIV status, increasing enrollment in care, and working toward viral load suppression.

C.2 MALARIA PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Under the Malaria Prevention and Response initiative, we made notable progress in enhancing community health and strengthening local health systems:

PEOPLE REACHED AND SERVICE DELIVERY: A total of 6,741 individuals (3,804 male and 2,937 female) were reached through malaria prevention services, including Integrated Community Case Management (ICCM). This initiative aimed to raise awareness and provide timely treatment to prevent the spread of malaria.



Figure 14: Health workers mentored on ICCM stock monitoring

Photo Credit: Apollo Opoi – Comms Asst.

HEALTH SYSTEM STRENGTHENING: RICE West Nile played a crucial role in reinforcing health systems in the four districts of Madi Okollo, Terego, Pakwach, and Nebbi. This support included facilitating coordination meetings with Village Health Teams (VHTs) and supervision of health facilities, leading to improved health data management, better quality reports submitted timely and better services at the health facilities. Specifically, 140 health workers

were mentored on ICCM stock monitoring, and 622 VHTs were supported during Health facility support supervision to the community.

IMPROVED DOCUMENTATION AND STOCK MANAGEMENT: Documentation practices were enhanced in 34 private health facilities, and there was a 7.5% increase in stock management knowledge among District Health Team members, ensuring better management of malaria treatment resources.

C.3 SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR) AND FAMILY PLANNING (FP)

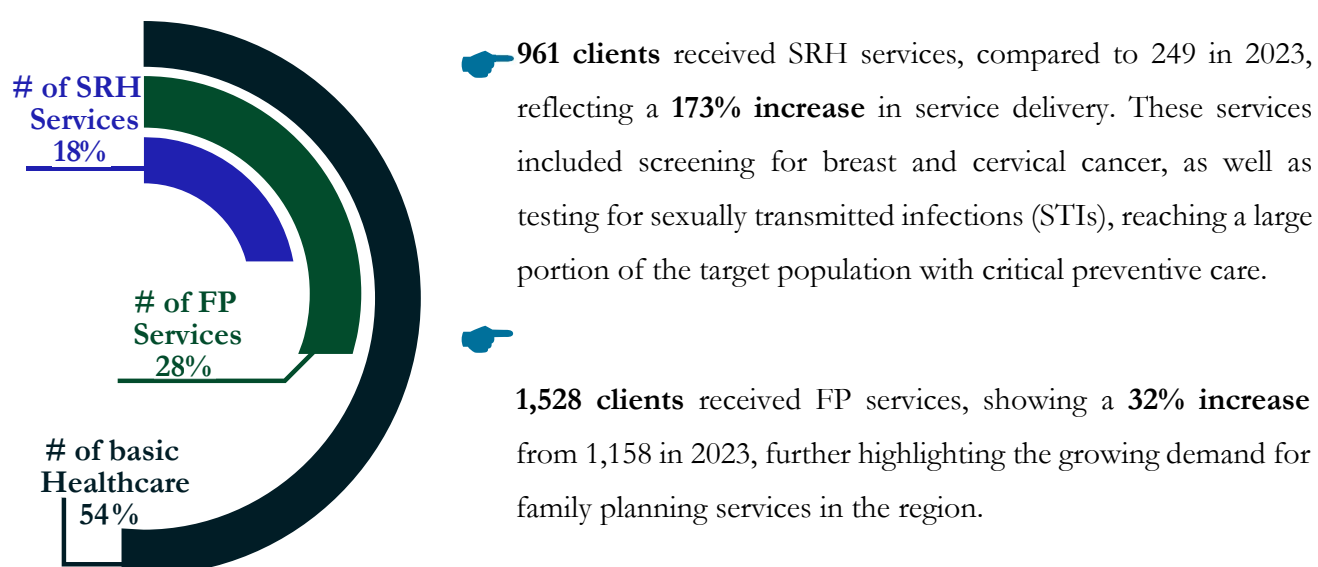


Figure 15: A health worker from Bidibidi Health Center III sensitizing women in Bidibidi Yumbe District

In 2024, notable progress was made in increasing awareness and access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Family Planning (FP) services, particularly in hard-to-reach fishing and refugee communities. Key outcomes include:

Increased Awareness and uptake of SRHR and FP services: A total of 20,766 individuals (women, men, and adolescents) were reached with SRHR and FP information through a combination of approaches involving door-to-door awareness, community dialogues and peer to peer outreaches leading to increased uptake of SRH and FP services at all the health facilities in the communities reached. 79.8% of the participants demonstrated increased knowledge of better parenting skills, Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), Child rights and Gender-Based Violence.

SRH and FP Service Delivered:



Expanded Healthcare Services: 2,943 women, men and youth received basic healthcare services reflecting a 38% increase over similar services delivered in 2023. This rise in service provision was driven by growing demand for healthcare, particularly in hard-to-reach communities. Of those served, 64% were children under 5, who received essential services including deworming tablets, vitamin A supplements, and vaccination, helping to address child health needs in these communities.

Note: SDGs supported are SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 13: Climate Action, SDG 15: Life on Land

D.1. COMMUNITY SENSITIZATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

In alignment with global, regional, and national development aspirations, particularly Agenda 2030, SDGs 6, 13 & 15, significant progress was made in promoting environmental protection and sustainable practices across Madi Okollo, Obongi, Arua, Arua City, Koboko and Yumbe districts. Key initiatives included:

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND AWARENESS: A total of 20,298 (7,303 males, 12,995 females)



Figure 16: Hon. Drabe Ismail during a radio campaign awareness on Environmental Accountability.

Photo Credit: Apollo Opoi – Comms Asst.

community members were reached through a variety of engagement strategies, including targeted community dialogues, door-to-door outreach, and radio spot messages on Aulogo FM and Spirit FM. This created a positive impact in the communities. For example, Awareness on environmental conservation among the refugee and host communities in Zone 1, Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement increased from 59.8% to 69.5% over the past one-and-a-

half-years, demonstrating a growing understanding of environmental issues, while adoption of environmental conservation practices rose from 62.5% to 71.0% over the same period (source: Mid-term review report for HESI project), reflecting a positive shift in both attitudes and behaviours toward sustainable practices.

The sensitization also led to 75.32% of the farmers basing their farming plans on weather information received through radios, extension workers, community dialogues, social media, and other sources compared to 5.10% reported at baseline.

E.2. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

Over 12,240 wood and fruit trees were planted across Koboko and Yumbe districts through the establishment of three-acre woodlots and two-acre orchards in Bidi Bidi and Lobule refugee settlements and surrounding host communities. This initiative aimed to enhance biodiversity, combat deforestation, and provide sustainable sources of firewood and fruits for the communities.

Significant strides were also made in wetland rehabilitation and afforestation efforts: 20 hectares of *Maesopsis Eminii* (Musizi), 5.4 hectares of African Mahogany, and 1.8 hectares of Bamboo were



Figure 17: Aleru Farmers Group (Mixed Group) potting as they establish a community-managed tree nursery in Koboko District.

established in Arua City and Arua district as part of ongoing wetland restoration efforts. These tree species play a critical role in stabilizing soil, improving water retention, and restoring the ecological balance in wetland areas.

The tree seedlings planted were raised from three community-managed tree nurseries, ensuring local ownership and active participation in environmental conservation. These community-

managed efforts contribute to the long-term sustainability and care of the planted trees.

E GOVERNANCE AND PEACE

Note: SDG supported is SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY ON ACCESS TO SERVICES AND RESOURCES: 1,565 people (939 females, 626 male) from the refugee and host communities were reached through dialogues on;

- Access to natural resources such as land and firewood
- Service delivery by Government
- Insecurity between refugees and host communities
- Domestic violence

These dialogues were facilitated by the local government officials and other key stakeholders in the public and private sectors participated. Community concerns documented were forwarded to the relevant stakeholders for further management and resolution, ensuring that the voices of both refugees and host

community members were heard and that actions would be taken to address these challenges. As a result, **5 refugees in Palorinya refugee settlement accessed 5.3 acres of land.**



Figure 18: Radio Community Dialogue with Alerura Women's Group at Iboa Health Centre Palorinya Obongi District.

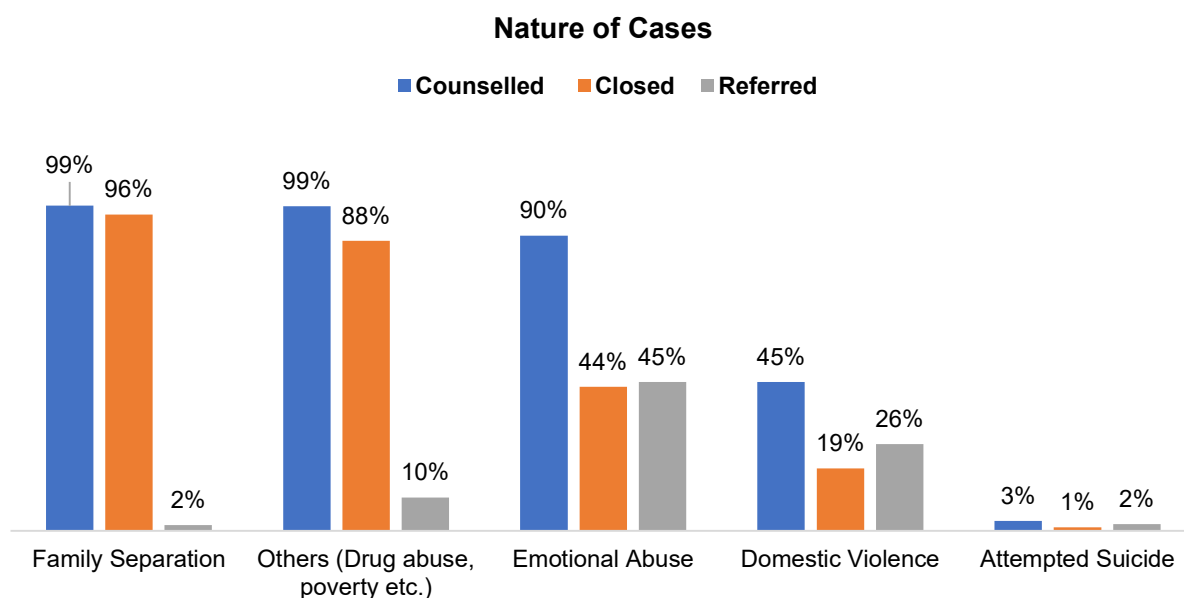


Figure 19: A group photo of participants who were trained in advocacy to engage with duty bearers on issues affecting women and youth in Palorinya Sub County

96 community members including 52 refugees, 72 females and 24 males were trained in advocacy to engage with duty bearers on issues affecting women and youth. **20 of them including 08 refugees, 14 female and 06 male participated in a budget conference** in Itula and

Palorinya sub-counties where they presented pertinent issues such as unemployment, limited access to land, power imbalance etc. for inclusion in the sub county budgets.

426 conflicted affected persons were counselled through group, individual and child art therapy sessions. **These included 316 females and 110 males** who faced various challenges including suicidal attempts, poverty, gender-based violence, and parental negligence among others. 49 of them were referred to partners for further support while 05 received material support from RICE West Nile for recovery.



GENDER INCLUSION:

In 2024, RICE West Nile deliberately targeted women in its various projects, with at least 60% of project support directed towards them. Furthermore, gender-responsive approaches, such as Gender Action Learning Systems, Enabling Rural Innovation, life skills training, Positive Deviance, and Village Savings and Loans Associations, were employed to address existing gender stereotypes and gaps.



Figure 20: Targeted community dialogue with men and women from Itula Subcounty Obongi district.

Gender-inclusive community dialogues were conducted to ensure that all gender had meaningful participation and voice in decision-making processes. These dialogues aimed to create a safe and accessible space where individuals of all genders felt comfortable sharing their perspectives, concerns, and ideas. Facilitators were trained in inclusive dialogue techniques to

encourage participation from diverse groups, including women, men, youth, and marginalized community members. In certain cases, targeted dialogues focusing on a specific gender e.g., women, girls, boys and men were conducted. The discussions focused on identifying community needs, prioritizing development initiatives, and shaping project implementation strategies. Feedback gathered from these dialogues was then directly incorporated into project design and implementation to ensure that community voices were heard and valued.

Five changing rooms and incinerators were constructed for adolescent girls in five primary schools across Obongi district. These facilities were designed to provide girls with private and hygienic spaces to manage their menstrual hygiene at school, addressing a significant barrier to their education. Each changing room was equipped with incinerator and water tank. Hygiene was promoted by training girls and boys in the targeted schools on making liquid soap and reusable sanitary pads. The incinerators were installed to ensure the safe and environmentally sound disposal of sanitary products.

DISABILITY INCLUSION:

Seventy persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Madi Okollo district received livelihood support. This initiative aimed to enhance their economic independence and social inclusion. The support provided was tailored to the specific needs and abilities of each individual.

Thirteen children with disabilities received assistive devices to improve their access to inclusive education. These devices were specifically chosen to address the individual needs of each child including; wheelchairs, hearing aids, visual aids, orthotics, and communication devices. The provision of these devices followed a comprehensive assessment conducted by Medical Officers from Moyo Referral Hospital to determine the most appropriate and effective tools for each child's specific learning and mobility challenges.

Ramps were incorporated into the design of two new classroom blocks constructed in primary schools within Obongi District. This modification ensures accessibility for the pupils, teachers, and other individuals with mobility impairments, promoting inclusive education.

SAFEGUARDING:

A comprehensive safeguarding policy was disseminated to all staff, volunteers and service providers who signed the safeguarding commitment. Regular staff training sessions are conducted to enhance their understanding and application of the safeguarding principles and practices.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



*Figure 21: Promotion of Apiary for Groups in Enyau catchment area as a way of protecting the wetlands.
Photo credit: Otuti Hillary*

The integration of apiary activities within FMNR sites demonstrated a positive impact on environmental protection and participant engagement as well as enhancing income streams. This finding suggests that combining complementary interventions can

enhance project sustainability, environmental sustainability and participant ownership since the context within which projects are implemented can evolve significantly over time.

G

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

LIMITED AGRICULTURAL LAND: Refugee communities are often faced with the challenge of limited agricultural land. To address this, a mixed-group approach and block farming was implemented. Additionally, implementing sustainable agricultural practices, such as crop rotation and water conservation helped maximize land use and minimize environmental impact.

EXTREME CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS: Agricultural production was significantly affected by adverse effects of climate change such as drought and floods. To mitigate these impacts, several strategies were implemented. These included promoting drought-resistant and fast-maturing crop varieties, which were adapted to dry conditions and have shorter growing seasons, thus minimizing yield losses during drought. Additionally, promoting water for production through efficient irrigation practices, such as drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting, significantly reduced water consumption and improved water use efficiency.

SHRINKING DONOR FUNDS: Shifts in donor funding priorities significantly impacted our work leaving certain program areas hugely underfunded. To mitigate this risk, the organization cultivated flexibility in their programming and actively pursued local resource mobilization strategies.

H

LESSONS LEARNED

MIXED GROUPING ENHANCES SOCIAL COHESION: The formation of mixed SDC groups has promoted social cohesion among members: Findings from evaluations revealed that there is increased trust and confidence between the host and refugee groups.

TAILORED FINANCIAL SERVICES: The linkage of SDCs to customized financial services has quickened their access to credit and loan services, reducing the barriers faced by vulnerable groups, especially refugees in accessing financial services.

LINE PLANTING: Beyond increasing yields, better farming techniques such as line planting are improving collaboration between men and women in farm work. Men and women are increasingly working together leading to better communication, mutual respect, and a deeper understanding of each other's roles in agricultural production.

COMMUNITY LED INITIATIVES ARE MORE SUSTAINABLE: Youth led initiatives to identify solutions to their community challenges proved more successful and sustainable as evidenced with the youth in Imvepi Refugee Settlement and the host community under i-UPSHIFT project.

INVOLVEMENT OF RELIGIOUS AND OPINION LEADERS PROMOTES SRH & FP SERVICES:

The involvement of religious and community leaders has been key in breaking cultural and religious barriers to accessing SRH and FP services. In Bidibidi refugee settlement, their efforts have helped change misconceptions about having many children and religious opposition to FP methods. This has led to a positive shift in community beliefs and greater acceptance of SRH and FP services.

I ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

STAFF CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT



Figure 22: Staff group photo during AAP training at RICE West Nile office.

As part of our commitment to continuous learning and growth, staff members underwent capacity enhancement in different areas, including Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), reinforcing our dedication to transparency, responsiveness, and inclusivity in service delivery. This training

equipped the team with essential skills to better engage communities and uphold their rights.

Similarly, staff capacity was strengthened in first aid, financial management, gender inclusion, environmental accountability, and advocacy, among other critical areas. These advancements were made possible through collaborations with partners and networks such as DENVIVA and UWASNET.

END-OF-YEAR CELEBRATION

To celebrate our achievements and foster team cohesion, we concluded the year with a memorable end-of-year party at Araa Fishing Lodge in Adjumani District. The event provided a well-deserved opportunity for staff to unwind, reflect on successes, and strengthen bonds, setting a positive tone for the year ahead.



Figure 23: Staff of RICE West Nile during end of year Team Building Activity in Araa Fishing Lodge, Adjumani District. Photo Credit: Apollo Opoi

BOARD ENGAGEMENTS:



Figure 24: Board members attending a training on resource mobilization, organizational development, and child protection

Capacity of our Board of Directors (BoD) was enhanced in resource mobilization, organizational development, and child protection, leading to a BoD-led advocacy initiative in Madi Okollo and Zombo districts focused on ending teenage pregnancy.

To further streamline organizational processes, several key policies were approved, including the Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) Policy; Partnership Management Policy; Transport Policy; Mobile Money, Foreign exchange and Fair Share Policy; ensuring greater efficiency in our operations and strategic growth.

FROM HIRING TO BEING EXPERT IN SHARING VSLA SAVINGS

Members of Meru Kulu Kuch SFG share their excitement during sharing of their savings in October 2023.

Photo Credit: Vincent Opiyo – Program Coordinator Moyo

Meru Kulu Kuch Savings and Farmers' group (SFG) located in Olyevu Parish Pawor sub county was selected to benefit from the LSF project in March 2023. The group was formed in 2021 and has been saving without any training of members on the principles of VSLA methodology. They had to hire someone to share their

savings but when RICE West Nile trained the executive members on VSLA methodology, they were able to make the calculations by themselves causing a lot of excitement among the members.

"Last year we had to hire somebody to help us calculate the shares of every member at a cost but after you trained us, we realized that it is easy and this time we made the calculations by ourselves," said Mr. Oryema Bosco, one of the executives of the group who participated in the training on VLSA methodology. "I have trained the executives of another group in my village here to learn how to make the calculations for their savings so that they will also distribute their savings by themselves. They were very happy for my generous knowledge sharing," added Bosco.

The group shared out their first cycle of saving in October 2022 where they hired an accountant to help them in calculating what each member was to receive at a fee of UGX 30,000. Each group member had to contribute UGX 1,000 to meet this cost.

However, in October 2023 during the sharing of the second saving cycle, the group's executive was able to make the calculations by themselves and they were very excited to have saved the money that they would have spent on hiring someone to help them in the distribution of the savings. This was possible due to the training RICE West Nile gave to the group during their second saving cycle.

"Today we are happy to see our own members doing the calculations for us and every member is happy with what they received. Thank you, RICE West Nile and CHASE Africa for training us," says Acan Juspina, a member of Merukelokuc group.

On the other hand, the training of the group by RICE West Nile on VSLA methodology made them to realize that they were charging too much interest on the loans taken by the members

which discourages them from taking the loan for starting small investments. Going forward, they have adopted the recommendations from the Officer who trained them.

JOMOYI ANTHONY'S JOURNEY TO FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE



Figure 25: Mr. Jomoyi Anthony tethering the goat he purchased out of savings. Photo credit: Anyama Herbert

Mr. Jomoyi Anthony, a 23-year-old South Sudanese refugee and a member of "God is Great" VSLA Group in Zone 2 of Imvepi Refugee Settlement which is supported by the FSL Project, has become a shining example to his community members. He joined the group in 2021 while preparing to enter secondary school, motivated by the

pressing need to find a way to fund his education. His elder brother, who had been supporting him in school enrolled in a course, leaving Anthony to find alternative means to support his education.

In 2022, Mr. Jomoyi attended training on kitchen gardening provided by a Community-Based Trainer (CBT) of the FSL Project. This training inspired him to establish a tomato garden, which he tended to in his free time—during weekends and evenings after school. His dedication paid off when, in 2023, he earned UGX 370,000 from the sale of tomatoes and part of which was consumed by his family. This income allowed him to purchase necessary scholastic materials while saving part of his earnings during his group's weekly VSLA meetings.

Despite being a student, Mr. Jomoyi proved his financial discipline and ambition. By the end of the last savings cycle in February 2024, he had saved more than any other group member, accumulating UGX 464,000. With this money, he purchased a goat, a suitcase, and a mattress. He also rented a quarter-acre plot of land to grow sesame (simsim). Today, the goat has produced, further expanding his assets and income potential.

In addition to farming, Mr. Jomoyi supplements his income by engaging in casual labour on weekends and during school holidays. This extra income enables him to continue saving regularly, maintaining his commitment to financial independence despite his growing academic workload as

a S.3 student at Imvepi Secondary School. He plans to remain committed to completing secondary school and potentially pursue higher education.

Mr. Jomoyi's journey is an inspiration to his peers, showing that with hard work, resourcefulness, and the right support, it is possible to overcome financial challenges. By making the most of the resources available to him—VSLA savings, kitchen gardening, and casual labour—he has not only sustained his education but also laid a foundation for long-term financial security. His success is a powerful example of how committed refugees can overcome their challenges by embracing new skills and making strategic financial decisions.

MS. AUYO'S RESILIENCE FROM WIDOWHOOD TO SUCCESS



Ms. Auyo Palma, a 36-year-old widow with four children (one girl and three boys), is a member of the Lange B savings group in Toloro Village in Moyo District. Palma lost her husband in 2023 due to a natural cause. She was not involved in any savings groups due to her late husband's disapproval, who believed such groups were a waste of time and misled women. However, in 2020, Ms. Auyo persisted in joining the Lange B savings group, eventually gaining her husband's consent upon convincing him. The same group started getting support from RICE West Nile through the Security Protection and Economic Empowerment (SUPREME) project funded by the European Union and implemented in a consortium led by World Vision, and co-implementors ZOA and SNV. During her first savings cycle at the end of 2020, she accumulated 290,000 Ugandan Shillings (equivalent to 74.3 Euros), which she contributed towards improving their family's grass-thatched hut.

“Impressed by my savings, my husband became supportive and subsequently joined the savings group,”

Ms. Auyo recalls. Before joining the group, life was

challenging due to solitary farming efforts, low crop yields, and financial constraints. However, after participating in training on improved farming practices, goal setting, and financial literacy, the farming methods changed significantly. “I adopted row planting and improved agronomic



Figure 26: Ms. Auyo Palma taking care of her chicks

practices, while my husband contributed to weeding and harvesting, leading to increased crop yields.”

Recognized for her dedication and hard work, Ms. Auyo was selected to represent her group at an exchange learning visit to Abi Zardi Agricultural Center. This experience sparked her interest in



Figure 27: Auyo's three-room house under construction

poultry farming, an area she wanted to explore further. At the time, she was already raising a small flock of ten local chickens. To foster economic stimulus, the project supported the savings and development clusters with block and enterprise development grants. The enterprise development grants were competitive and she produced a competitive business plan and

successfully secured a UGX 5 million, she constructed a poultry house and purchased her initial stock of chicks. Through diligent management, Ms. Auyo achieved significant growth in her poultry business. She has successfully raised and sold multiple batches of chickens (from 80 chicks to 100 to 150 to 100 and 300), generating substantial income. Additionally, she has diversified her income by venturing into simsim (sesame) trading, with a current stock of 200 kilograms earning her Ugx. 252,000.

Ms. Auyo has invested a portion of her earnings into constructing a three-room house while allocating the remainder to household expenses, education, and business reinvestment. Her entrepreneurial journey is a testament to the power of perseverance and the positive impact of supportive community groups.

FROM PEASANT FARMER TO COMMERCIAL CASSAVA PRODUCER

My name is Asitolo Dominica, a 30-year-old mother of two and a member of the Ogubaku B savings group in Vura Opi Village, Moyo Sub County. Before joining the SUPREME project, I was a peasant farmer living at my parents' home. Supporting them and my siblings in school was a constant struggle. My income from subsistence farming was barely enough to meet our basic needs.



Dominica preparing cassava flour in her compound in Moyo Sub County to be sent to the market.

Fortunately, I had the opportunity to join the Savings and Development Cluster and attend training sessions facilitated by the Village Agents. These trainings were transformative. I learned about goal setting, enterprise selection, financial literacy, and farming as a business. The group was picked by RICE West Nile which was implementing the Security Protection and Economic Empowerment (SUPREME) project in Moyo and Obongi districts in consortium with World Vision Uganda, ZOA and SNV. The process for onboarding the groups was rigorous, through the sub-county office.

The SUPREME project introduced an enterprise development grant to our group. The process involved group members nominating potential business-minded persons to receive the support. Three (3) members were nominated for a vote, and I emerged the winner. They trained us for three days in the enterprises of one's choice. Utilizing the skills I acquired during the training; I developed a business plan to transition from subsistence farming to commercial cassava production.

After receiving the first grant instalment in July 2022, I ploughed and planted 6 acres of cassava. The second instalment allowed me to expand by an additional 1.5 acres. In total, I received 4.5 million Ugandan shillings (1,100.7). In May 2023, before harvesting the cassava tubers, I successfully sold cassava cuttings for 2 million Ugandan shillings (€489.2)



Figure 28: Dominica harvesting cassava from her garden.

Photo Credit: Vincent Opiyo – RICE West Nile

The cassava harvest in July 2023 yielded 5,555.6 kilograms of dry chips, which I sold for 1,800 shillings per kilogram, generating a total of 10 million Ugandan shillings (€2,446.1). With this income, I made a down payment of 5 million Ugandan shillings (€1,223) for 15 acres of farmland in Lefori Sub County and paid the tuition fees for my two siblings pursuing certificates in Agriculture and Nursing. What made the sales possible was, I did marketing by word of mouth, which attracted buyers who bought raw cassava from the garden, others bought the stems, while others waited for the flour.

“This being the first time I earned money as high as UGX 10,000,000 from farming, I almost got confused but maintained my vision to be a cassava supplier in Moyo Sub County. My plan is to work hard so that I can transform my cassava into bread.” – says Dominica.

This project not only boosted our family's food security but also empowered me to support my parents in a way I couldn't before. As a young woman, owning land was something I never imagined possible. Now, with the project's support, it has become a reality. I am currently preparing 10 acres of the new land for planting maize and cassava in the first season of 2024.



Figure 23: A group photo of the GEM club member at Okayo Primary School in Abanga SC Zombo District during a visit by EU delegate.

Photo Credit: Apollo Opoi – Comms Asst.



Figure 24: Student and his teacher from Chinyi Primary School showing a bucket of tomatoes harvested from the school kitchen garden.

Photo Credit: Comms RICE West Nile

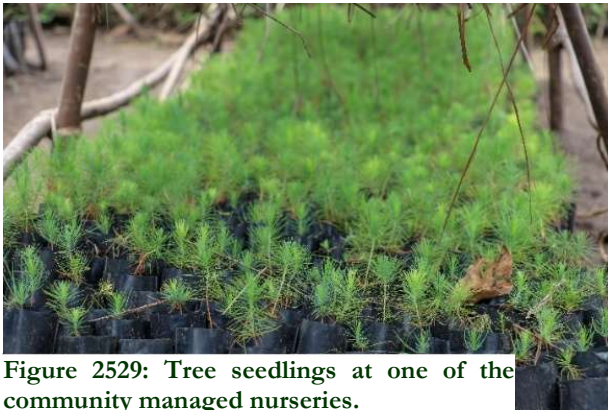


Figure 2529: Tree seedlings at one of the community managed nurseries.

Photo Credit: Comms RICE West Nile



Figure 26: A group member from Oleiva Bee Farmers group in Arua City monitoring a bee hive.

Photo Credit: Apollo Opoi – Comms Asst.



Figure 27: Community Health Outreach in Kurungu Primary School Bidibidi R S Yumbe District.

Photo Credit: Apollo Opoi – Comms Asst.



Figure 28: Community Health Outreach in Iyete Primary School Bidibidi R S Yumbe District.

Photo Credit: Apollo Opoi – Comms Asst.



Figure 29: Women Economic Empowerment through VSLA methodology.

Photo Credit: Comms RICE West Nile



Figure 30: Youth empowerment through trades for income security and self-reliance.

Photo Credit: Comms RICE West Nile



Figure 32: A demo garden at Water For Production site in Lobule SC Koboko District

Photo Credit: Comms RICE West Nile



Figure 34: A group member from Alerura Women's Group Iboa Palorinya SC engaging with duty bearers during a budget conference.

Photo Credit: Comms RICE West Nile



Figure 31: Our Board chair Can. Dralega Onesmus Planting a memorial tree at Koboko District.

Photo Credit: Comms RICE West Nile



Figure 33: Executive Director RICE West Nile Mr. Pax Sakari (*middle*) with H.E Frederieke Quispel ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (left) and Danish Ambassador H.E Signe Winding Albjerg

Photo Credit: Comms RICE West Nile



**RICE
WEST NILE**
Striving for Self Reliance

P.O Box 481 Arua City Uganda
Plot 16 Block Awudele Crescent
T: 0393 238 163 | M: 0773 472234, 0702 857349
E: jambo@ricewestnile.org | ricewn@gmail.com
W: www.ricewestnile.org