



Q1 2025 (Jan - March)

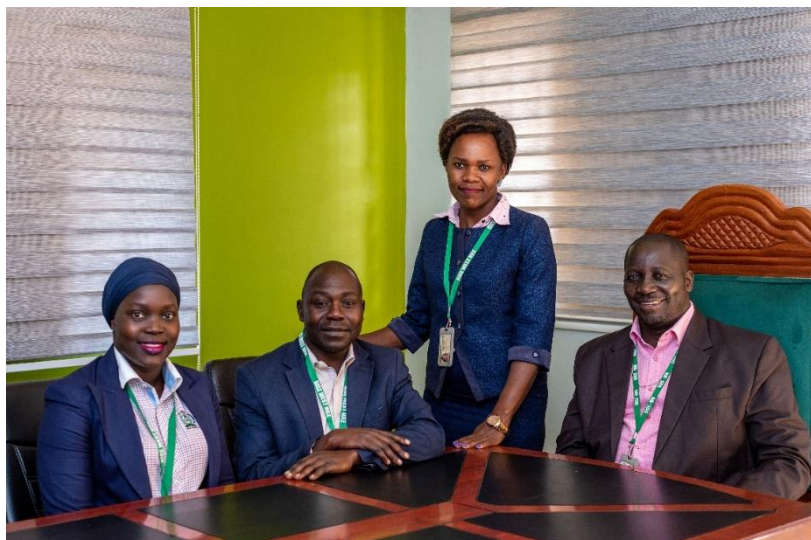
Newsletter

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	1
List Of Acronyms.....	1
1. Health Promotion	4
2. Sustainable Livelihoods	6
3. Environment and Natural Resources	8
5. Challenges.....	11
6. Organizational Development.....	11
7. Significant Change Stories.....	0
8. Gallery	0

LIST OF ACRONYMS

FP	Family Planning
ICCM	Integrated Community Case Management
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PTA	Parents and Teachers Association
PWD	Persons With Disability
RICE West Nile	Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile
SDCs	Saving Development Clusters
SFG	Savings and Farmer Groups
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health Rights
UGX	Ugandan Shillings
USD	United States Dollar
VHT	Village Health Teams
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association



RICE West Nile Core Management Team: From Right, Mr. Pax Sakari – Executive Director, Ms. Yikiru Comfort Mercy – Manager Programs, Mr. Jackson Olema – Manager Operation and Ms. Liberia Munduru – Senior Operations Coordinator

Who we are

Founded in 2004, Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE West Nile) is a legally registered indigenous non-governmental organization (NGO) with the Registrar of Companies and the National Bureau for NGO in Uganda. The organization holds a national mandate, allowing it to operate across the country.

RICE West Nile envisions ‘*Self-reliant, sustainable, and healthy communities living with dignity.*’ To achieve this, the organization focuses on building the capacities of communities to foster self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods.

The organization operates under valid Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and district local governments. Currently, RICE West Nile implements active programs in 11 out of the 13 districts of the West Nile subregion (including Arua City) and five refugee settlements (Palorinya, Lobule, Imvepi, Rhinocamp and Bidibidi).

Vision

Self-reliant, Sustainable and Healthy Communities.

Mission:

To develop capacities of communities for self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods.

Core Values

- i. Novelty
- ii. Integrity
- iii. Partnership
- iv. Equity





Target Groups

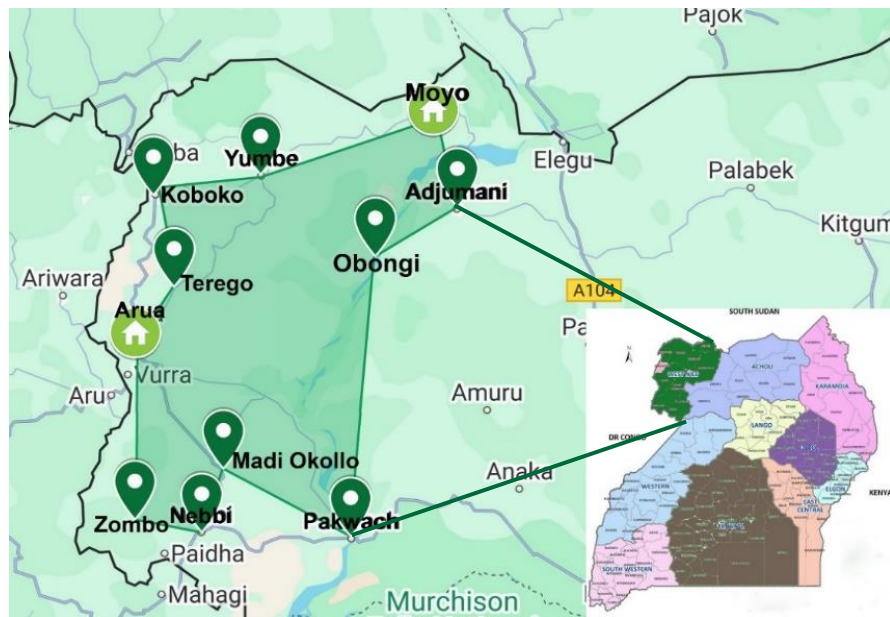
RICE West Nile’s interventions primarily target children, adolescents, youth, and women.

Our Approach

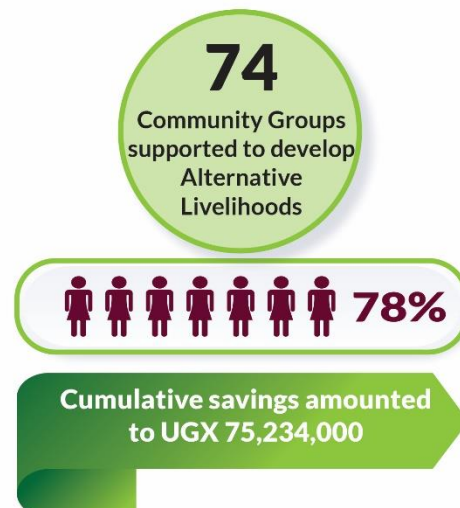
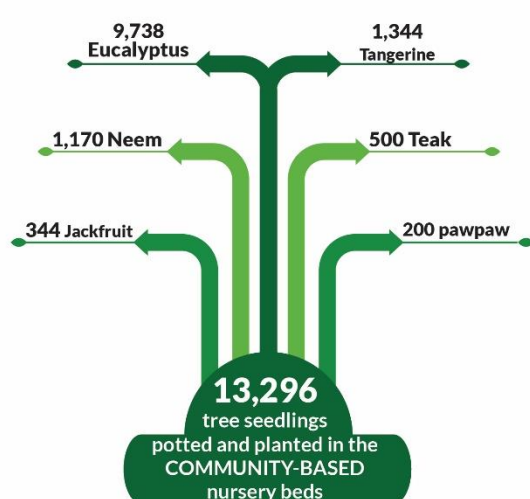
RICE West Nile employs community-led approaches that place participants at the centre of all programming. This inclusive, participatory model promotes locally driven change, enhances community ownership, and ensures the sustainability of project outcomes over time.

Our Footprint

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



Key Achievements



1. HEALTH PROMOTION



In collaboration with health facilities and other implementing partners, we provide a range of free health care services including family planning services, malaria testing and treatment, cervical cancer screening, HIV prevention, testing and care services, key population, Child Day Plus (CDP) i.e. immunization, follow up of pregnant mothers among others through Mobile Health Clinics and Community Dialogues targeting hard to reach and underserved communities.

Addressing socio-cultural barriers to improve access to Malaria prevention, Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and Family Planning (FP)



Figure 1: Targeted community dialogue on FP and SRHR services in Rigbo Sub County Madi Okollo district. Photo Credit: Charity Dralega – PO

Between January and March 2025, integrated health programs in Yumbe, Terego, Nebbi, Pakwach, Koboko, and Madi Okollo led to significant improvements in health knowledge, attitudes, and outcomes. Awareness campaigns, reaching 6,037 individuals (65.6 F, 0.8% PWDs), including 300 primary school pupils (118 M, 182 F), through door-to-door outreach, Back Pack Nurse (BPN) services,



Figure 2: A mid-wife training CHWs on administration of the short-term FP methods in Olujobo and Pawor HC III. Photo credit: Apollo Opoi – Communications Assistant

and community dialogues, resulted in: A substantial reduction in malaria prevalence in Nebbi (from 66.5% to 33.8%) and Pakwach (from 54% to 22%). Improved understanding and more positive attitudes, including reduced stigma, related to Family Planning (FP) and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

Enhancing Health Service Delivery Through District Health Team-Led Support Supervision

District Health Management Team support supervision visits within the quarter in Pakwach, Terego, Madi Okollo, and Nebbi districts to public health facilities, Private for Profit (PFP), Private Not for Profit (PNFP) resulted in improvement of malaria case management practices, enhanced Integrated Community Case Management (ICCM) commodity stock management, waste management and improved documentation, timely reporting, and data use in health planning and decision-making. The visits exceeded initial targets, reaching 34 health facilities and 51 Village Health Teams (VHTs), with a focus on high-burden areas.



Figure 3: District review performance meeting in Terego DLG. Photo Credit: Charity Dralega – PO

Improved malaria reporting in the District Health Information System II (DHIS II)

The Quarterly Data Cleaning meetings in Terego, Madi Okollo, Pakwach, and Nebbi districts led to improved accuracy and reliability of health data for decision making through the identification and rectification of inaccuracies in key reporting tools (forms 033b, 105/108, and 097b), and strengthened the capacity of 39 facility staff (22 M, 17 F) from 16 health facilities in data entry, validation, and reporting practices.



Figure 4: Data cleaning meeting with Health Facilities from Madi Okollo District. Photo Credit: Charity Dralega – PO

2. SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS



RICE West Nile work with farmer groups through Enabling Rural Innovation (ERI) Approach to develop value chains for selected enterprises aimed at moving farmers away from subsistence to commercial farming so as to address food and income insecurity. RICE West Nile provide link ages to private sectors to access quality seeds and better markets for their produce.

Community-based learning centres (Bonga and Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) centres) are also promoted for out of school adolescents and unemployed youth to learn life skills and Income Generating Activities (IGAs)

Diversification of livelihood alternatives for women, youth and men in refugee and host communities.



Figure 5: Betrice Lazee one of our beneficiaries started a small kiosk selling petty goods in front of her home. Photo Credit: Veronicah Wairimu G – Comms Officer.

124 social structure members (77.4% women) in Obongi and Koboko started diverse small businesses, such as fish selling, produce buying and selling, and general merchandise. Additionally, 6 youth groups that were dependent on River Enyau in Arua received alternative livelihood project support, like cassava and maize value addition equipment, apiary, horticulture, piggery and poultry. These have contributed to improving their income and food security while restoring the river.

Strengthened the social structures through VSLA methodology and financial literacy



Figure 6: Alerura Women's Group during their saving day.
Photo Credit: Veronicah Wairimu G – Comms Officer

In the new saving cycle that started in January 2025, a total of 908 members (710 females and 198 males) from Savings Development Clusters (SDCs) and Baba and Mama (B&M) members in Lobule and Palorinya refugee and host communities actively engaged in group savings initiatives, accumulating UGX 75,234,000 (SDCs) and UGX 9,670,000 (B&M) by March 2025, with 590 members accessing loans for various purposes. 4 Women and Youth

groups, supported to implement innovative peacebuilding Income Generating Activities (IGAs). Four promising business plans, developed by community groups in Palorinya refugee settlement, received in-kind support following a thorough assessment. These groups, which include the Alerua women group (poultry), Yenga fish processing (fish business), Pamoja Bonga Forum (phone charging), and Junior achievement (tent & chair hire), also supplemented the support for their Income Generating Activities (IGAs). This intervention is expected to generate income for the groups and strengthen their capacity for advocacy initiatives while promoting social cohesion.



Figure 7: Support visit by Manager Programs to Yenga Fish Processing Group in Palorinya, Obongi District. Photo credit: Veronicah Wairimu G – Comms Officer



Figure 8: Supporting Yenga Fish Processing Group in Palorinya, Obongi District, with savings kits to promote a culture of saving within the community. Photo credit: Veronicah Wairimu G – Comms Officer

3. ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES



RICE West Nile support communities to manage tree nursery and woodlots to increase vegetation cover and enhance their capacity to effectively utilize the natural resources around them. We also promote the use of renewable energy technologies i.e. solar home system and improved cook stoves and we also train the community members to construct improved cook stoves using local available materials so as to conserve the environment. We also train the community on plastic waste recycling where plastic waste is turned in to pavers and ventilators. We promote good governance in oil and gas sector and sustainable land use and management for the benefit of the wider community.

Community-managed tree growing



Figure 9: Aleru Farmers Group (Mixed Group) members in Lobule sub county potting and planting tree seedling on their community managed tree nursery site.

Photo Credit: Veronicah Wairimu G – Comms officer

Empowered community members are actively managing four established tree nursery sites in Lobule-Koboko, Palorinya-Obongi. Additional partnership with National Forestry Authority (NFA) in Arua City, and Arua District, have resulted in 20,937 tree seedlings of diverse species (pawpaw, jackfruit, tangerine, eucalyptus, gravelia, lira, mahogany, pine, neem, teak) potted and planted, thereby leading to restoration of 05ha of grazing and cropping land in Arua district hilly slopes in Vurra sub county.

Promotion of renewable energy technologies is leading to the restoration of the River Enyau.

To contribute to climate justice, 10 groups in Arua City and Arua District received training on constructing energy-saving stoves. To date, 61 improved cookstoves have been built, serving as an alternative source of income and reducing the amount of wood fuel used at household level.



Figure 10: Aleru Farmers Group (Mixed Group) members in Lobule sub county potting and planting tree seedling on their community managed tree nursery site.

Photo Credit: Veronicah Wairimu G – Comms officer

4. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT



school fees, basic needs and startup kits to realize their education dreams inform of progression to higher levels of education and economic empowerment for descent livelihoods following completion of skills training. We also provide inclusive, quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) to establish a strong foundation for lifelong learning targeting marginalized and disadvantages children aged 3-8 years from refugee and host communities.

Girls and boys equipped with skills to produce reusable sanitary pads, enhancing menstrual hygiene management and promoting gender equity



Figure 11: Learners from Bellameling Primary school learning how to make the reusable sanitary pads.

Photo Credit: Apollo Opoi – Comms Asstant.

A comprehensive training in menstrual hygiene management and reusable sanitary pad making empowered 651 learners (249 boys, 402 girls, 23 PWD) from seven model schools in Obongi district, equipping adolescent girls with practical skills and knowledge to manage menstruation with dignity, dispelling myths, fostering a supportive school environment, and contributing to reduced absenteeism.

"Before I learned how to make reusable pads, I would sometimes miss school because I didn't have anything to use. But now, I feel more confident. I can stay in school and focus on my lessons without worrying about my period," – Vivian, 15-year-old pupil, Belameling Primary School

Pupils in Imvepi Refugee Settlement received scholastic materials and psychosocial support.

Tailored protection and support services, including counselling, educational assistance (books, MHM kits, pens, uniforms, fees), and structured play for emotional well-being, were provided to vulnerable children in Imvepi refugee settlement, benefiting 32 pupils through individualized referrals and engaging 1,440 learners, thereby contributing to their retention in school.

Digital learning enhances children's numeracy and literacy levels.

1,120 learners in the P3 transition class utilized the 'Can't Wait to Learn' digital self-paced learning program (designed for 1,200 children), which employs tablets with pre-recorded games to enhance their numeracy and literacy skills.

Increased community awareness and dialogue are highlighting the dangers and consequences of a lack of integrity for children.

Seven community awareness and dialogue sessions, facilitated by the Inspector of Schools, were successfully conducted across seven model schools, reaching 522 participants (including a significant representation of refugees and persons with disabilities) in Obongi district. Trained professionals and technical officers facilitated community dialogues and home visits, enhancing the psychosocial support capacity of 1,124 children, parents, and caregivers in Imvepi refugee settlement. These sessions addressed critical issues such as children's integrity, child protection, cultural practices impacting learning, mental health, and inclusion. A notable outcome was a reported positive shift in community attitudes, with participants expressing a renewed commitment to instilling values like trust, honesty, and accountability in children.

Teachers equipped with child-friendly, inclusive, protective, and gender-responsive teaching-learning approaches

Seventy teachers from seven model and twenty-one partner schools in Obongi District participated in a training workshop led by education officials, focusing on gender and disability inclusion, child protection, and psychosocial support, alongside five Coaching Observation Reflection and Engagement (CORE) sessions emphasizing teacher psycho-emotional well-being and personal planning with coaching were conducted for 14 teachers in Imvepi refugee settlement. This capacity-building has resulted in teachers adopting more inclusive and supportive classroom practices, fostering environments where all learners feel safe, supported, and empowered, as evidenced by increased confidence and participation, particularly among girls.

5. CHALLENGES

The male-dominated leadership structure in District Local Governments (DLGs) and Sub-Counties limited the participation of women, especially in radio talk shows and inception meetings, affecting the inclusion of women's perspectives in discussions.

Refugee communities often face the challenge of limited agricultural land. To address this, a mixed-group approach and block farming was implemented.

Extreme climate change events, such as droughts and floods, posed significant challenges to agricultural production.

6. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Inauguration of a new Board of Directors

The 7th Board of Directors (BoD) inauguration took place in January, the new BoD comprise 9 (4 F, 5 M) key members providing technical guidance aligned with RICE West Nile's areas of implementation. The ceremony was officiated by His Lordship, the Rt. Rev. Charles Collins Andaku, Bishop of the Madi West Nile Diocese, and was held at the Diocesan Hall.



Figure 12: BOD members taking a group photo with his lordship bishop Rt. Rev. Charles Collins Andaku.

Photo Credit: Veronica Wairimu G – Comms Officer.



Figure 13: Counsel Odama Henry taking oath of office as Chairperson of the Board of Directors, RICE West Nile.

Photo Credit: Veronica Wairimu G – Comms officer

Organization certification for Accountability to Affected Population in Action

Completion of the six-month "Accountability to Affected Population in Action" training, in collaboration with the U-LEARN consortium led by International Rescue Committee (IRC), has enhanced RICE West Nile's responsiveness to project participant concerns and increased trust.



Figure 14: RICE West Nile staff receive certificate of completion from IRC Country Director.

7. SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORIES

1. From using rags to soft, locally made sanitary pads: The story of Meling Vivian



Meling Vivian, a 15-year-old Sudanese refugee in Palorinya settlement, recounts the

challenges of managing menstruation using old cloths, which led to infections and school absenteeism. Joining the Bonga club in 2024 provided her with training on menstrual hygiene management and how to make reusable sanitary pads using appropriate materials. Now able to make her pads, Meling attends school with confidence and supports other girls. Her regular attendance and Bonga club participation led to her election as head girl in 2025, a feat she attributes to her pad-making skills. Dreaming of becoming a nurse to further empower girls and women, she appreciates RICE West Nile and Stromme Foundation's support and advocates for extending the program to out-of-school adolescents to prevent exploitation related to the lack of sanitary pads.

2. Empowering Families Through Family Planning: The Story of Oloya Innocent



Mr Oloya Innocent and his second wife Mrs Acan Jackline. **Photo credit:** Veronicah Wairimu G – Comms Officer.

Mr. Oloya Innocent, a father of twelve in Madi Okollo, struggled with finances, leading to some of his children dropping out of school. His involvement as a Community Health Volunteer with RICE West Nile provided him

with Family Planning knowledge. He and his second wife, Mrs. Acan Jackline, decided to use a three-year family planning method, which relieved the financial and health burdens of frequent pregnancies. Acan, who had never used family planning before, found it empowering, enabling her to work, run her businesses, and afford school fees after joining a women's savings group. Inspired by her experience, she encouraged other women in her group to adopt family planning. Oloya now educates other men about its benefits, expressing gratitude to RICE West Nile for the knowledge that has brought organization and financial relief to his family, regretting not learning about it sooner.

1. From Refugee to Role Model: Scovia Jojo's Stitch of Hope



Scovia at her business place tailoring a dress for her client. **Photo credit:** Veronicah Wairimu – Comms Officer

In Palorinya Refugee Settlement, 21-year-old South Sudanese refugee Scovia Jojo transformed her life through the SRILL Project's tailoring training by RICE West Nile. Receiving a sewing machine and materials, she now runs a home-based tailoring business, earning enough to save and pay her daughter's school fees. Her success led her savings group to grant her a loan for expansion. Beyond her business, Scovia mentors other young women in tailoring and is forming a Trainer-of-Trainers group. Grateful for the opportunity, she aims to empower others and dreams of opening a stall in a larger market, demonstrating resilience and hope.

8. GALLERY



Group photo of partners and local government representatives during the West Nile launch of the Partnership on Accountability, Civic Engagement, and Rights; supported by Denmark, The Netherlands, Sweden, and Ireland.

Photo credit: Veronicah Wairimu G, Comms Officer.



Group photo of civic engagement partners with the Swedish delegation, including H.E. Maria Håkansson, Ambassador of Sweden to Uganda, and Hon. Benjamin Dousa, Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade.

Photo credit: Veronicah Wairimu G – Comms Officer



Joint monitoring visit by RICE West Nile management and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) team to farmers in Bidibidi Refugee Settlement and host communities, Yumbe District.

Photo credit: Apollo Opoi – Comms Assistant



Mid-wife explaining to the participants on the SRH services at Pandu village Panduku Parish in Pawor Sub County during community dialogue targeting men and women.

Photo Credit: Apollo Opoi - Comms Assistant



Margaret Dawa, a member from Imvepi Refugee Settlement and host community, opens the discussion during the women's forum organised by RICE West Nile.

Photo credit: Apollo Opoi – Communications Assistant



Bonga Clubs members of Aliba primary sharing their experience with learners from Obongi and Aringajobi Primary School during knowledge sharing exercise at Aliba Primray School.

Photo Credit: Apollo Opoi - Comms Assistant



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Striving for Self Reliance

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