

## Strengthening effectiveness of Child Protection Committees to respond to the needs of refugee children in Kiryandongo district

Milly Lagu (47years) is the president of the Child Protection Committee that was established by the Prime Minister's Office in 2014 during the initial influx of refugees from South Sudan. Milly participated in implementation of the Comic Relief funded project to protect South Sudanese children and she shared the following experiences and aspirations with the TPO Uganda monitoring team in February 2017.

Her role as President of the Child protection committee in the settlement involved mobilizing members to attend meetings, representing at the district meetings and sharing outcomes with CPC members. She was happy to hold the two positions because it allowed her to share lessons and emerging challenges across the two structures. Milly appreciated the criticality of the CPC in addressing child protection needs in the settlement but was even more pleased with partners such as TPO Uganda who she mentioned continued to train the CPC members in a range of other development needs such psychosocial support which had enabled them to understand and engage well with majority war affected children.



**M**illy shared that the CPC worked with TPO Uganda to identify orphans and other unaccompanied children to benefit from psychosocial, education and livelihoods support. She was happy whenever she saw children playing in the child friendly space at Bidong primary school. She believed this was critical to helping children from different South Sudanese tribes to interact and release tensions related to historical tribal conflicts in their country. She encouraged TPO Uganda and War Child UK to support establishment of similar spaces in the settlement to support mental and physical wellbeing of children as the future generation.

**When we first got here, there was a lot of tension among us and we did not know how to manage it, even for the child protection committee members. Initially, a Dinka Child Protection Committee member could not comfortably attend to a Nuer child in need of services. TPO Uganda social workers were cognizant of these dynamics among South Sudanese refugees and played a critical role in training us to understand our roles, ethical requirements and to appreciate and facilitate the peace and reconciliation agenda for coexistence. We also participated in the TPO Uganda led community dialogues through which we shared critical messages on children's rights and opportunities to address the needs of children through existing referral mechanisms.**

While we count our successes, we are still challenged by the growing cases of child motherhood. In the settlements, 14 and 16 year girls who are not married are labelled *Abuba*. Which is also translated to English to mean grandmother. So many of our girls get pregnant and get married to prevent themselves from getting labelled. TPO Uganda supported training for some girls on menstrual hygiene but those are few since everyday more refugees come in. We need to think about increasing support in this area.

**Milly Lagu, CPC President  
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