



Sustaining Women's leadership

MEMPROW's ROOTS & RISE

...Against All Odds


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Stories of Persistence.
Power and Proven Practice

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Progress on Ending Child Marriages and Early Unions

CHILD MARRIAGE IS A VIOLATION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO STOP CHILD MARRIAGE?

This publication presents the inspiring journey and progress of the 'Ending Child Marriages and Early Unions' project, implemented by MEMPROW with support from Girls First Fund. Since its inception in 2019, this initiative has worked with communities in Nebbi Sub-County and Nyaravur-Angal Town Council to combat harmful practices that violate the rights of girls and young women. MEMPROW has continued to empower survivors of sexual Gender-Based Violence through structured mentoring, counselling, and life skills training.

In addition to supporting survivors, the project actively reaches out to girls who are at risk of early marriage and school dropout, working preventatively to safeguard their futures and keep them in school. This proactive approach is strengthened by involving key stakeholders in collective action, including parents, local leaders, schools, health workers, women advisors, and law enforcement.

Through strategic collaborations, the project champions school re-entry for child mothers, increases community awareness on girls' rights, and strengthens protective structures. It also engages boys and men in promoting positive masculinity, cultivating allies in the fight against harmful norms. School-based clubs and community engagements have equipped both girls and boys with knowledge on SRHR, leadership, and advocacy, enabling them to challenge early unions and child marriages from within their communities.

As part of its economic empowerment pillar, MEMPROW also provides seed capital to groups of child mothers, helping them rebuild their lives with dignity and financial resilience.

This publication showcases stories of transformation, community mobilization efforts, and achievements that highlight MEMPROW's commitment to building a safer, more just environment for young women and girls in Nebbi and Uganda as a whole.

Stella Oyungroth
Programme Officer, MEMPROW



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IS A VIOLATION
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**What are you Doing
To Stop Child Marriage?**



A Journey Growth and Grace with Piranyim

– By Sr. Ongur Constance Floric –

When I first arrived at **Alwala Koch Health Centre II** in 2019, I thought my primary duty was to serve as a nurse. But fate had a broader mission. I found myself surrounded by young people who were silently crying out for more than medicine; they needed **direction, dignity**, and someone to believe in them.

"I didn't plan to start a youth group—I simply started listening. And once I listened, I could not unsee their potential."

That's how **Piranyim Youth Group** began. A small cluster of young people, some out of school, some shy, some hardened by hardship, began gathering under the shade of a tree near the health centre. Our first conversations were on **sexual and reproductive health**. At first, there was awkward silence. But gradually, their questions grew bolder. Our conversations deepened.

But we didn't stop at knowledge. I believed that information without opportunity was not enough. Together with MEMPROW, we began creating pathways, linking young people to **vocational training, school re-enrolment**, and **economic opportunities**, conducted series of trainings on social survival skills, economic empowerment and even gave tshirts.

I remember the pride in one boy's eyes when he told me he'd received **PDM funding** for his small business. And the joy when three girls secured places at the **Zeu Skilling Centre**, learning tailoring under the presidential initiative. We cheered when one of our boys was admitted into the **army** and when two girls, once written off, walked back into primary and secondary school classrooms.

"Every success story felt like a small revolution. It was proof that transformation is possible, right here, right now, with what we have."

As Piranyim grew to over **120 members**, it also matured. Youth began taking initiative. They organized internal meetings, supported peers struggling with mental health or stigma, and even contributed to group decisions. They were no longer just beneficiaries; they were leaders.

As our work expanded, we then reached out to **parents**, engaged **TASO clients**, and included **community leaders**. It wasn't always easy, but the results spoke volumes. Parents became allies. The community began to shift its view of what youth, especially girls, were capable of.

On the day of my farewell, I stood before the group with a full heart. Not sadness, but gratitude. There were tears, yes, but they were mixed with pride, celebration, and hope.

"I told them: this isn't the end. I may be moving to Acil Health Centre II, but everything we built, your courage, your unity, your fire, it stays with you. Keep going. Keep growing."

Now, as I begin a new chapter, I carry Piranyim with me, not as a past project, but as proof of what **community-driven mentorship** can do. Something we would not have done without continuous support from MEMPROW and the steps taken by the youth.

A Survivor's Path to Justice and the Fight against Abuse



On 29th January 2025, we visited Nebbi Central Police Station to follow up on the usage of police forms availed by MEMPROW, with support from Girls First Fund. Mr. Nicholas Barekye and the CID officer shared progress on a disturbing case of aggravated defilement involving a 40-year-old peasant farmer and his 10-year-old niece, Lee. (Not real names)

Lee, an orphan living with her uncle in Labora village, had silently endured abuse since September 2024. Okweda, a known drunkard, exploited her mother's absence while she worked in the gardens. The abuse only came to light when Lee's cousin caught Okweda in the act and informed her mother, who reported the matter to local authorities. The LC swiftly referred the case to the police.

Thanks to the readily available police forms at the station, Lee's case was expedited. In the past, families would struggle with photocopying forms, delaying justice. Okweda was arrested, and his next court appearance is set for 30th January 2025.

The police commended the role of MEMPROW and community cooperation in accelerating justice. Lee and her mother are now receiving psychosocial support to help them heal. This case highlights how poverty and lack of education increase girls' vulnerability to abuse. But it also shows what's possible when communities, law enforcement, and organizations like MEMPROW work together. As the officer said, "The readily available police forms and our collaboration with MEMPROW have been a game-changer in cases like Lee's. We are committed to continuing our efforts to support victims of abuse and ensure that justice is served."

This Is Me: A Young Mother, A Farmer, and Still Becoming

- By Giramia Prisca, Koch Parish -



"I Am Not Just a Young Mother—I'm a Farmer, a Fighter, and I'm Becoming Who I Was Meant to Be"

People used to look at me and only see a young girl, a mother too soon. But I am more than that. My name is **Giramia Prisca**, and I'm from Koch Parish. And this is how I chose to live, not just survive.

I am a proud rice farmer. It may sound simple, but for me, it's a great change. Last season, I prepared **three-quarters of an acre** using a **tractor**. Yes, a tractor! That rumble in the field sounded like freedom to me. The year before, I could only manage half an acre using a hand hoe. But this time, the field opened up fast.

When it was time to plant, I didn't do it alone. I gathered **ten people** (five women and five men) and we sowed those rice seeds. My mother was there too, never leaving my side. She's my backbone. She says to me often, **"Prisca, the child marriage didn't break you, it made you see your strength earlier than most."** And I believe her.

As we planted, we laughed and joked. The others kept teasing, **"Prisca, with this rice, you'll build yourself a mabati house and we'll be your regular visitors!"** I laughed, but in my heart, I took it seriously. One day, they'll visit. And they'll find me there; welcoming, successful, and proud.

In 2024, the rains weren't kind. But even then, from just half an acre, I brought home **two sacks of rice**. Not much to some, but everything to me. We made it stretch. My mother and my siblings helped in every way they could.

And farming isn't the only thing I do. I also sell **silver fish, bananas, and roasted groundnuts**. It keeps the home running. Every Friday and Sunday, I save **20,000 shillings** with two savings groups. That's me planning for tomorrow.

I say this from the deepest part of my heart, **MEMPROW** changed my life. They didn't just teach me, they saw me. They gave me space to become. My mother always says, **"Even when the world shuts a door, if you're strong, you build a whole new house."** And that's exactly what I'm doing.

I'm not the only girl with a past like mine. But I am showing that **the future can be different**. I am choosing rice over regret, dignity over despair, and growth over silence.

I am **Giramia Prisca**. A young mother, yes, but also a leader, a farmer, a woman rebuilding her story on her own terms.



THE BODA-BODA PATROL:

How We Are Becoming Guardians of Girls in the Community

My Name is Jackson, and I ride a boda in Nebbi town. But lately, I've been riding with a bigger purpose. It all started after a training by MEMPROW on child protection and referral pathways. We were shown how boda riders could protect children, especially girls, from harm. I left that session thinking, *"This isn't just talk. I can do something."*

Fast forward to New Year's Eve, during the Fireworks moment at Gaf Hotel, and other happening places, I couldn't shake off my feelings; I knew this was when kids, especially young girls, get caught in risky situations. So, I called up five other trained Bodas, and we agreed: we'd patrol.

We stationed ourselves near the main roundabout, just 50 meters from Gaf Hotel. As midnight crept closer, we started spotting children, young girls, 9 to maybe 12 years old, wandering alone. Some had no shoes. Most had no clue how far from home they'd gone. And not a single adult in sight. We just rode up gently, asked where they were headed, who they came with. Some shrugged. Others looked scared. That's when we decided: *We'll take them home.*

One by one, we picked them up and rode out to Namrwodho, Paminya, Kazana. When we got to their homes, the real shock came. Some parents didn't even know their girls had slipped out. One father insisted his daughter was asleep. Still, none of them were angry. They thanked us deeply. Eleven kids were taken home that evening; Eleven reminders that we can't protect our girls with silence and assumptions. We became big brothers, uncles, watchmen.

We've always been on the road but now, we're also on guard. For every girl we brought home, we pushed back a little harder against child marriage, against teenage pregnancy, against letting our girls fall through the cracks. Because protecting children isn't someone else's job. It's ours too.



CHANGING THE STORY FOR GIRLS

at Adwongo Primary School

Narrated by: Madam Adubango Janet, Head Teacher

When I was transferred to Adwongo Primary School in 2024, I found a painful reality only four girls in Primary Seven were to sit for exams. It shook me deeply. MEMPROW's training on positive parenting and girls' education changed my perspective. I asked myself: *As a woman and a leader, how can I ensure more girls stay in school?*

With my deputy, we launched drama-based sensitization involving upper primary learners. They now perform in market areas, tackling issues like child marriage, school dropout, and second-chance education. These plays spark real conversations. We've welcomed 14 girls back to school, and for the first time, we have eight girls in P.7

The community is engaged, and performances are now twice a month. With support from Koch Health Centre II and the Piranyim youth group, we follow up with girls, provide psychosocial support, and work with parents to reduce absenteeism through follow-ups on girls, and alerting parents whose children miss classes to reduce cases of absenteeism and drop out.

Earlier MEMPROW-led campaigns and school-parent dialogues improved fee payment and provision of scholastic materials, though seasonal farming affects consistency. Still, I remind parents: "Education must remain a priority."

Today, Adwongo is a safe, empowering space for girls. With the right mindset and support, we are ending child marriage and keeping our daughters in class.



Transforming Azingu Primary School: How Positive Parenting Dialogues Boosted Attendance, Performance, and Girl Child Retention

In 2022, through support from Girls First Fund (GFF), the MEMPROW program partnered with the Ministry of Gender to roll out *positive parenting dialogues* across schools in Nebbi District. One such school, Azingu Primary School, has since become an example of what can happen when parents, teachers, and communities work together for the good of their children.

At the centre of this change was former Head Teacher Mr. Orombi Stephen, who, alongside Madam Sophy Fuacan, the Community Development Officer for Nebbi Sub-County, rallied parents, SMC members, and PTA representatives into a series of reflective conversations. These dialogues, now held quarterly, created a space where stakeholders could openly discuss the issues affecting pupils' learning and agree on solutions that placed children's education at the center of community life.

During these dialogues, PTA members made a bold commitment: to actively support school attendance. They began tracking absenteeism, conducting home visits, and working with parents to address the barriers keeping children, especially girls, out of the classroom. From reminders about the importance of school dues to helping parents navigate seasonal challenges, the PTA became a powerful force in boosting both accountability and support.

The impact was immediate and sustained. Teachers noted an improvement in homework completion, parents began attending school meetings more consistently, and children particularly girls, were staying in school.

Fast-forward to 2024, and Azingu Primary School's transformation is unmistakable:

- Attendance skyrocketed, with 95% of learners from P1 to P7 having their school dues fully paid.
- Girl child retention improved dramatically: In 2023, only 2 out of 16 PLE candidates were girls. By 2024, that number had jumped to 8 out of 24 with zero absentees or dropouts.
- Academic performance surged, with all pupils passing and attaining 2nd and 3rd grades, a major improvement from previous years.

Current Head Teacher Ms. Harriet Kintho attributes this shift to the strong school-community relationship: *"Parents no longer wait for a crisis to visit the school. They feel like partners in learning, not outsiders."*





Piranyim Youth Group redefining the power in Young Voices to Lead Change

In Nebbi Sub-County, a powerful youth-led initiative is quietly changing lives and reshaping community norms. The **Piranyim Youth Group**, founded by a determined cohort of girls and boys, is on a mission to tackle issues that directly affect their generation, **sexual reproductive health (SRH), early marriage, and economic empowerment**.

Now 76 members strong (40 girls and 36 boys), Piranyim is a movement. Meeting every Tuesday at **Koch Health Centre**, what started as health awareness sessions led by the facility in charge has grown into dynamic, peer-led mentorship and action forums. These young changemakers have created a space where SRH knowledge is shared, taboos are broken, and youth voices are heard.

Their impact goes far beyond information-sharing. The group runs **weekly savings schemes**, engages in **group farming**, and uses **sports and performing arts**, like football, netball, music, dance, and drama, to drive community conversations on topics such as early marriage prevention, safe relationships, and girls' rights. Through creativity and collaboration, they're making sensitive issues visible and community-inclusive.

A standout achievement has been the transformation of boys into **champions for girls' protection**. Once bystanders, these boys now stand at the forefront of efforts to ensure girls are safe from harassment and exploitation. Their actions have helped shift harmful gender norms and foster a culture of accountability among peers.

With support from Koch Health Centre, Piranyim members have access to **free counseling, HIV testing, and contraceptives**, critical services for informed health decisions. Economically, the group has become a support network, with members uplifting each other through shared business initiatives. The members trained by MEMPROW in **reusable sanitary pad-making** are not only passing on the knowledge to others but also earning income, contributing to menstrual health and sustainability in their communities.



From Survivor to National Girl Champion

At just 16 years old, **Jesca** has endured more than most will in a lifetime—but her story is one of **resilience, justice, and renewed hope**.

Jesca first entered MEMPROW's care in 2022, after being referred by Nyaravur Police Station following a **defilement case**. Accompanied by her father on a difficult visit to Nebbi Hospital, her case risked stagnation until MEMPROW intervened—mobilizing partners, pushing for justice, and ensuring that the case was transferred to Nebbi Central Police Station. With support from **HEDCHE** (a Plan International-supported organization), the police were facilitated to arrest the perpetrator, who now remains remanded at Koch Prisons.

Tragically, Jesca later lost her twin. Yet, with **ongoing psychosocial support from MEMPROW** and a deep commitment to healing, she returned to **Atego Seed Secondary School**, determined to reclaim her future. MEMPROW covered her school fees and requirements for three terms, while Jesca and her father worked in gardens to sustain her progress.

Despite her disability and the daily 10km commute to school, Jesca persevered. In 2024, her courage and advocacy earned her national recognition as a **Girl Champion in the Survivor Category**—a powerful symbol of what girls can overcome when they are supported, believed, and empowered.

Today, Jesca is finally enrolled in the school's **boarding section**, a safer and more stable environment. Her parents now stand firmly behind her education, proud of the girl who refused to give up.



Building Beyond Survival

Just three years ago, **Kwiocwiny Nancy**, a teenage mother living with her grandmother, faced an uncertain future. At only 17, she bore the full weight of motherhood and the responsibility of her child's education, without stable income, resources, or clear direction. But what she did have was **determination**, and when that met opportunity, something extraordinary began to unfold.

Nancy became part of the **first cohort of MEMPROW's Girls First Fund (GFF) program**, a turning point that would rewrite her story. Through the program's mentorship, life-skills training, and economic empowerment sessions, a spark was lit. She saw in herself what others often overlook in young mothers: **potential**.

Driven by the program's support and her resilience, Nancy ventured into business. It wasn't easy, but her firmness paid off. As her small enterprise grew, so did her confidence and sense of independence. No longer just surviving, Nancy began **dreaming bigger** and acting on it.

Her goal? **To build a home** not just a shelter, but a symbol of stability, pride, and a new beginning for her and her child.

Today, that dream is nearly complete. With her income, Nancy has **laid the foundation and walls of her very own house**, and within a month, she plans to move in. Every brick tells the story of a young woman who refused to be defined by circumstance.

Nancy's journey is a proof of what's possible when girls and young women are **equipped, believed in, and supported**. From child mother to entrepreneur to soon-to-be homeowner, Nancy is blazing a trail for others to follow.



MEMPROW Honored for Advancing Girls' Rights: A Women's Day Win Worth Celebrating

On this year's **International Women's Day**, MEMPROW was honored with a prestigious **District Award** for its outstanding work in **ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy** under the Girls First Fund-supported initiative.

The recognition, presented by district leaders in Nebbi, at the IWD celebration, was a powerful affirmation of what feminist, grassroots action can achieve. Over the past year, MEMPROW has worked alongside community leaders, teachers, youth, and parents to shift mindsets, strengthen systems, and build safer, more empowering spaces for girls.

Through transformative positive parenting dialogues, school-community outreach, economic empowerment for child mothers, and youth-centered education campaigns, the program has directly reached hundreds and influenced thousands.

"This award is a symbol to the resilience of girls and the strength of communities when they come together for change," said one team member. As we continue this journey, we carry this recognition as fuel to go further because every girl deserves to grow, thrive, and choose her future freely.

TESTIMONIALS: VOICES ON THE GROUND

Juliet – Vice Chairperson, Piranyim Youth Group

"MEMPROW attached us to a health practitioner, we called her 'Mummy Constance.' She didn't just teach us about SRH; she taught us about dignity, about showing up for ourselves and each other. She listened. She showed us that even if you fell, you could rise again. I'm not just vice-chairperson because I was elected, I'm here because she made me believe I could lead."

Okumu Peter – Reintegrated Youth, now a PDM beneficiary

"Before this group, I had no direction. I was always idle. Sr. Constance encouraged me to apply for funding under the PDM. Today, I have a small business. I now support my siblings with school fees. She gave me purpose."

Anonymous – Parent Representative

"As a parent, I've seen how this group saved our children from the streets and early marriages. MEMPROW didn't only speak to the youth but to us parents too. Our families are healthier because of MEMPROW."

Hon. Orombi Emmanuel – LCV Chairman, Nebbi District

"Piranyim is a model group in this district, and much of that is because of Sr. Constance's tireless work. And to MEMPROW, I see your hand in this. We appreciate the trainings, the follow-up, and especially how you support returnees like Vivian. I promise to walk with you as you embark on the next chapter of the brick-laying project."

"Before our engagement with MEMPROW, cases of abuse and injustice were often met with silence or minimal follow-up. Court cases, in particular, felt distant from our reach, and we rarely saw the need to get involved. But that mindset has completely shifted since we began working with MEMPROW. We have become more aware, more proactive, and more committed to supporting survivors. A powerful example of this change is when we helped a young survivor of defilement relocate to a safe shelter in Kampala—a step we might not have taken in the past. MEMPROW's influence has not only opened our eyes but has also equipped us with the courage and tools to act." ~ Police, Nebbi

Parish Committee Testimonial:

"Through the parish-led initiatives, our approach to cases of abuse and violence has significantly changed ever since we started engaging with MEMPROW. These days, we don't just listen, we act. We now ensure that survivors are referred to the right services and accompanied all the way to the police when necessary. These are responsibilities our committee previously overlooked or didn't fully understand. But today, we recognize the importance of standing with survivors from the very first moment. It's no longer about just being aware; it's about being accountable, responsive, and human."



GALLERY

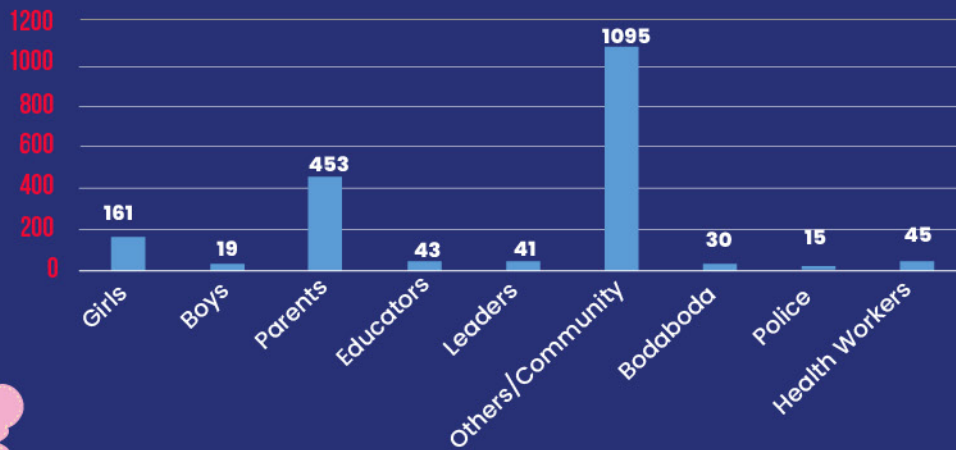




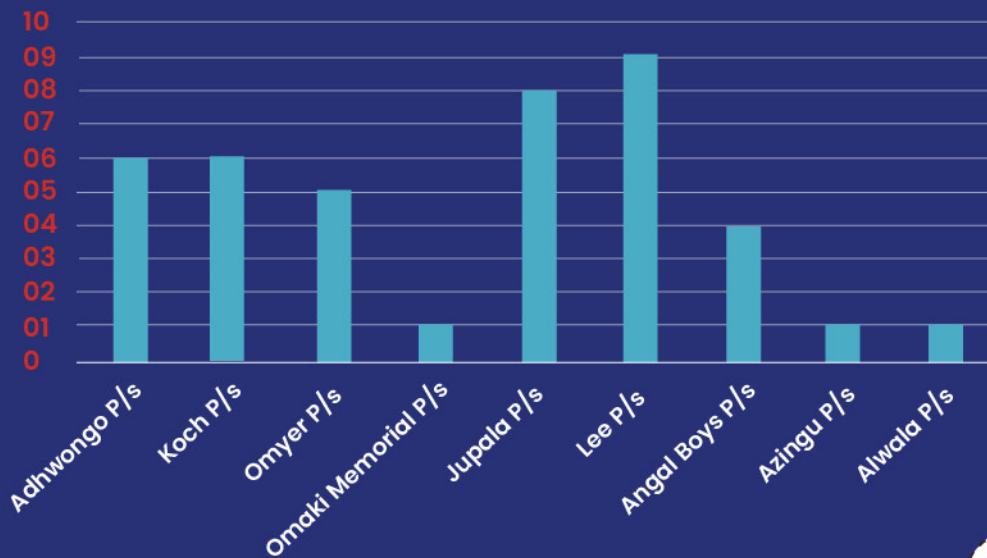
GALLERY

STATISTICS

Stakeholder Engagement between
July 2024 to June 2025



2024 Girls PLE Ranking Nebbi District



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Supporting Communities To End Child Marriage



Sustaining Women's leadership

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