



SUCCESS STORY

A BONGA GIRLS STORY

Holy Trinity Peace Village Kuron

"For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" Jeremiah 29:11

My name is Nakeno Lomong and I am 12 years old in 2022. I am a Toposa by tribe and a South Sudanese by nationality. I was born in a village called Gumariang, about a 30 minute walk from our Bonga Center. I live with my mother, Regina Lopem. I have four sisters and one brother in the family.

I lost my Father when he died four years back. He was a good man who could help with food and other things to support the family. He was a very successful and a good man. He was called Lokeno Natyang. When he died, we really lost a lot of stability in the family.

My mother is a hardworking woman but for a widow in Toposa Land it is not easy. After the unexpected death of my father, life became very hard. All the brothers of my father (my uncles) took everything away from my mother. Then our family had nothing to survive with. We really suffered.

My mother struggled as a great woman for her family and was finally able to join the Bonga team. When I joined Bonga Girls for the first time in 2020, I thought I could not manage what the others were doing. I was afraid of the others as they were strangers to me. I was shy around the other girls because they were unknown to me. Doing other things like baking bread, making mandasi (small fried dough balls) was a problem, but now I can do all of them without any problem.



Figure 1 Nakeno working in the vegetable garden in 2020



Figure 2 Nakeno in 2022 making bread at the workshop

I like helping others to be like me because I was also like them. What I don't like is when other young girls are given to "big" men. If I see that, I have to report to the Bonga Animator. We are informed that early marriage is bad for our health and welfare. Marriage is okay but not at so young an age and not to such old men.

My Mother always escorts me to our Bonga Center. She is also among the Bonga Support Team of Gumariang. Now I stay with the family of one of the teachers who works with St John Paul II nursery school. By living with a different family, I am learning a lot which I didn't know before.

I am now in the Bonga Group. I am proud that I can do a lot of things very well. I am happy because I know many things which can make me self-confident and strong. I can stand alone when I grow up. I thank Peace

Village for helping me develop. There are many other girls like me and I hope we can all have the chance to learn and develop like this. If not for Kuron Peace Village, where would we be?

(Written by: Okori Emmanuel, Livelihoods Officer. Edited/produced by: Gabe Hurrish, Maryknoll Lay Missioner 04.July.2022)