

## PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### ***VisionFund International brings financial inclusion to refugees in West Nile settlements***

- ***First branch opened with another three planned in 2020***
- ***First microfinance organisation to serve refugee groups at scale with group loans in Palorinya settlement***
- ***Over 6,000 child refugees impacted by over USD60,000 in loans disbursed to parents***
- ***First time VisionFund has developed and provided microfinance services for refugees***

LONDON – 3 March 2020 – [VisionFund International](#) (VisionFund), the mission-focused microfinance subsidiary of children's charity World Vision, today announces that VisionFund Uganda is the first microfinance organisation to have established a branch in Moyo to serve the Palorinya refugee settlement, a remote part of Uganda home to over 121,000 refugees and over 48,000 Ugandan nationals<sup>1</sup>. VisionFund plans to bring financial services to the refugees at scale and will open a further three branches in 2020 with the second branch planned in the coming months in Yumbe district to serve both Yumbe town as well as the Bidibidi settlement, one of the largest refugee settlements in the world, home to over 230,000 refugees<sup>2</sup>.

Working with World Vision savings groups, VisionFund Uganda provides financial literacy training and loans to savings groups in Palorinya – mainly comprised of women from both the refugee and host communities - in order to enable savings group members to take loans to grow their small businesses and generate an income to support their families.

The increase of violence in South Sudan in 2016 has seen over 1.3 million<sup>3</sup> refugees, predominantly women and children, flee across the border into Uganda. Becoming separated from her husband in the chaos of escaping the soldiers in South Sudan, Mary walked for three days with her eight children carrying only a piece of cassava to feed them. She had run a profitable tea shop and been a midwife in her local village, but when she arrived in Uganda, she had to start over again. She made pancakes and sold them in the local market and joined one of the savings groups supported financially by VisionFund Uganda. With a loan from the group, she branched out to grow peas and make nut paste to increase her income. Now she is learning to sew and hopes in time to have her own tailoring shop so that she can continue to educate her children to give them the freedom to choose the futures they want.

---

<sup>1</sup> According to data from UNHCR <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/uga>

<sup>2</sup> According to data from UNHCR <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/uga>

<sup>3</sup> According to data from UNHCR <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/uga>

Martina Crailsheim, Refugee Microfinance Manager, VisionFund International explained:

“When we speak to the women living in the refugee settlements, all they want is to offer their children a better life and for that, they need to earn more money, to educate their children at schools within the settlements and then to send them on to further schooling outside the settlements.

“It’s important that we acknowledge the refugees are capable people with skills and our role is to help them financially be in a position where they can monetise those skills to create better livelihoods,” continued Mrs Crailsheim.

VisionFund Uganda is among the few first-moving microfinance institutions with the intention to serve refugee settlements at scale with a loan product that specifically targets saving groups. It has so far issued loans amounting of over USD80,000 to savings groups including 67 groups comprised of refugees. The refugee savings groups have over 1,500 members, 79% of whom are women and the loans provided have impacted over 6,000 child refugees<sup>4</sup>.

Michael Mithika, President & CEO of VisionFund International said:

“We are committed to vulnerable communities, empowering them to be more resilient and pursue opportunities through financial services, to increase their incomes and create better futures for children. VisionFund Uganda is leading the way in working with refugee populations, but we continue to support other vulnerable communities including in the fragile states of Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and internally displaced persons in Rakhine, Kachin, and Shan States in Myanmar.”

VisionFund Uganda’s work in the refugee settlements has been made possible thanks to funding from AbiTrust, Austrian Development Agency, Financial Sector Deepening Uganda, Grameen Credit Agricole, Swedish SIDA, VisionFund’s Women’s Empowerment Fund and World Vision.

-ENDS-

## **ABOUT VISIONFUND INTERNATIONAL**

VisionFund International, World Vision’s microfinance subsidiary, has been improving the lives of children in the developing world for over 15 years. By offering small loans and other financial services, clients develop successful businesses, enabling their children to grow up healthy and educated. In FY2019, VisionFund International’s network of microfinance institutions provided loans to 1.1 million clients, with nearly three-quarters of these going to women and over a third to clients actively involved in farming. Repayment rates were 97.1%. Also, in FY 2019, over 3.5 million children were positively impacted through its MFI network located across 28 countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America.

For further information please visit: [VisionFund.org](http://VisionFund.org)

## **MEDIA CONTACTS**

### **VisionFund International**

Miyon Kautz - VisionFund International | +1 253 777 6960 | [miyon\\_kautz@wvi.org](mailto:miyon_kautz@wvi.org)

Miranda Barham +44 (0)7899 030 304 | [miranda@mirandabarham.com](mailto:miranda@mirandabarham.com)

---

<sup>4</sup> Figures from VisionFund Uganda as of 24 February 2020