

# BEHOLD THE OVERCOMERS

A transformed activist promotes peace in her village



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA



Spotlight Initiative



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**M**arita Loyollo, a 25-year-old woman from Lomeri village, is one of the women who had lost hope and thought that violence against women was normal and could not be eradicated. Once known as a prominent drunkard, Marita now bears the testimony that change is possible.

Lomeri Village is part of Lolelia sub-county in Kaabong district, and it is here that Marita's curiosity led her to the training by Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU). She has become one of the best performing community activists.

Marita was introduced to drinking at an early age, and as a young girl, she grew up knowing it was normal for one to drink "ekweete" (local brew). As if things could not get worse, she fell pregnant and had to drop out of school in primary six. Throughout her pregnancy, she drunk "ekweete" and another popular local gin called "etule". Marita's drinking reached its peak at a time when the country was also flooded with cheap sachet waragi.



LOYOLLO MARTHA (30YRS)  
Peasant married with 3 children, a  
community activist from Lolelia centre,  
Loleria parish Kabong district



She would quarrel with her husband and abandon the home and her children, and pitch camp in the nearby trading centre, sometimes spending the night there in a drunken stupor. Her family and neighbours disapproved but what could they do? Today, Marita has visible scars on her body which she sustained from regular fights with her husband. She says that the neighbors and in-laws were fed up of her. But one day, that changed. She was chosen as a member of the village health team, which in a way meant that it would keep her busy and prevent her from spending much of her time drinking alcohol.

The beginning was not easy as people in the village shunned her services saying that she was irresponsible given her history. Her situation remained challenging until September 2019 when she was selected as a community activist by CDFU. She was trained and taken through change sessions that completely transformed her life. Marita learned

that change begins within oneself before reaching out to others. With this, she turned her life around.

Over a period of two months, Marita's husband noticed the change in her; there were no more fights, and to show his appreciation, he opened a general merchandise shop for her. Marita, whose marriage was on the verge of collapsing, is now invited by couples to give them wise counsel and she attributes this welcome from the community to the training she received from CDFU.

"I believe every person can change. Many women are let down by their husbands but in my case, it was me causing confusion in my family." She regrets her past behaviour and feels she has received a new lease on life.

Marita's desire is to see more trainings rolled out to capture a wider area, knowing that some people do wrong not because that they take pride in it but because they are ignorant. They need information and guidance.