

## *Profile: \$100 Start-Up*

2005-2008  
Village Enterprise Fund



Immaculate Ilukor's successful restaurant business has come a long way since its humble beginnings. What was once a small stall selling one or two food items is on its way to becoming a semi-permanent building with an iron sheet roof that will serve food as well as sell household items to its many customers.

Things have not always been easy for Immaculate and her family. As VEF business mentor Pauline Okello can attest, Immaculate and her family have struggled greatly. In Immaculate's part of Uganda, cattle raids and the Lord's Resistance Army's revolts have disrupted their lives in years past. Life got extremely difficult when Immaculate's husband died of AIDS in 1994. In addition to 12 children and half a dozen grandchildren, Immaculate cares for several others in her household.

Pauline knew about Immaculate's struggles, and also knew that Immaculate had great potential to improve her situation if she was given some help. In addition, Immaculate was extraordinarily dedicated to giving her children the opportunity to go to school – a rare thing for a woman who had not been to school herself. Pauline says, "She was hard-working and was disciplined about making her children's education a priority."

Pauline helped Immaculate form a small group to start a business and complete the VEF small business application. Soon Immaculate's team was approved for a VEF seed capital grant of \$100. At first, they offered only basic meals like beans and atapa or ugali (local breads). With time, they were able to offer more variety and higher quality food. Immaculate's cooking has become extremely popular. Amazingly, today she cooks items such as rice, chicken, cabbage, and matooke (local banana dish), and even slaughters up to three goats in one day to keep up with customer demand.

After a few months of running the restaurant, Immaculate was able to pay school fees for her children and send them back to school for the first time since her husband died. Since then, she has also been able to purchase three cows and four goats, as well as construct three mud huts on her land to house her large family. Additionally, Immaculate has saved more than 300,000 USH (about \$175 USD). She and her children and grandchildren are well-clothed, eat three meals a day on new ceramic plates, and some sleep on beds with mattresses, bed sheets, and blankets. Immaculate has even purchased a bicycle. Proud but also humble about these impressive signs of successes, she remarked, "God has carried me through until today and so I have been able to provide for my family."

Because of their remarkable success, Immaculate's team was later awarded a \$300 empowerment grant. A truly creative, hard-working individual who has persevered through many difficult circumstances, Immaculate has taken full advantage of these opportunities.

