

JRS, WALKING WITH REFUGEE WOMEN IN EAST AFRICA





FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international NGO working with refugees in 57 countries worldwide since the 1980s. Our approach is to have a holistic accompaniment, to serve and to advocate for the rights of refugees and the forcibly displaced; all these done through lenses of human dignity, empowerment and gender responsiveness.

In East Africa we work in programs for education, protection, livelihoods and emergency support.

We accompany women to become self-reliant, to be empowered and leading actors in the community.
To heal, to learn and to shine.

We welcome you to meet some of the women we've worked with throughout the region, to know a bit of their stories, their struggles and their hopes*.

**THANK YOU FOR HELPING US MAKE THIS
POSSIBLE WITH YOUR DONATIONS.**

**some of the names and profiles in this book have been modified and some pictures exchanged to ensure the protection and security of the stories portrayed.*

KENYA

Daud Anita

Congolese

35 years old

Livelihoods and business support

Daud Anita lost her husband and father of her children as a result of the violence in DRC. For her protection and to avoid further repercussions, her family urged her to leave the country and look for shelter with her children, somewhere where they could not be found.

That is how, in 2016, she arrived to Nairobi (Kenya), running for her life. They smuggled in a lorry full of cows, and were hiding in between the animals when there was the thread of a police control. Once in Nairobi, she had nowhere to live, no family, no friends... but she was lucky to be hosted at the lorry's driver sisters' house, until one day a friend told her about JRS.

Thanks to the support of JRS, Daud opened a West African food shop in Kawangware. A small *duka* full of dried food, species of any kind, and dozens of colorful food condiments! That business has allowed her to pay her rent, the school fees for her children, and to provide for her family.

In 2020, as many others, Daud suffered the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic heating her business. Thanks to the support of Alboan and the implementation of JRS, we could offer her business skills training and some capital money to bust her shop.

She learnt the importance of saving money, to keep an accounts book, and to plan in advance.

Her business is doing now way better!

You can watch
the full video
interview in here:



**Daud Anita
(35) at her
West
African food
shop.**



“I need my children to go to school. This is something important for me. And that is why I'm fighting for them, for their school.

This business is the one helping us to pay our house, to pay school.. everything! I am very happy!”

BURUNDI

Mungzero Samaza

Congolese**16 years old****Education**

Mungzero Samaza is a 16-year-old girl attending one of the primary education schools in Kavumu.

She arrived to the Kavumu camp (Burundi) in 2018 with her family, a family of 8.

As a result of an illness, she could not attend school for three years, until few years ago she was able to re-join education within the camp.

Her dream in the future is to become a teacher; to be able to support boys and girls become educated and empowered.

"Thanks to education now I can read and write!" she explained us.

"In primary education we don't have school bags or pagne [sanitary pads for the period]. Many girls drop-out from school because they don't have the pagne."

She explained how the lack of access to sanitary pads and hygiene materials for girls can lead to girls dropping out from school. For some of them, it is a source of sexual violence and exploitation, since they accept transactional sex in exchange of pads or money to get them.

"We [girls] must go to school, to become someone today and in the future!"

**Mungzero (16)
at her school
during an
interview
with JRS.**



KENYA

Federance Mukashui

Rwandese

56 years old

Mikono Refugee Craft Shop Supplier

Federance has another story of suffering as a result of tribal violence, but above all a story of resilience and overcoming.

Federance had to run from Rwanda in 1991, being a young girl, escaping from the genocide, with her family.

Member of a mixed ethnicity family they were targeted and persecuted by both sides of the conflict.

After running away to Uganda, they encountered again threats and persecution. Reason why they ran a second time to reach Nairobi.

Having left with many members of her family, some were lost and others died in the run. Chased by perpetrators, victims of cold, hunger and exhaustion. Federance survived the runs but she did not come out unscathed: as a result of an accident she hurt her leg, and up to today she depends on a crutch and has mobility difficulties.

When she arrived to Kenya as a young girl, she had no access to education nor a job to provide for herself. Due to the leg injury, she spent most of her time at home, where a friend of hers taught her how to prepare peanut butter and other sweets.

With her new new skills, in 2006 she started providing peanut butter for the Mikono Refugee Craft shop. She explains us that the business itself is slow but with the help they have received through the Mikono shop, she has been able to make some profitable sells.

“It is bad to be a refugee because of challenges one goes through... I just thank God for having given me another chance to live. [...] It is good to love one another... never choose to say that this is a refugee and this is not a refugee , let's just all love one another”

You can watch
the full video
interview in here:



**Federance at
her house,
during an
interview with
JRS team**





*If you want to taste the amazing homemade peanut butter of Federance, and support other urban refugees in Nairobi as her, you can visit the **Mikono Refugee Craft Shop!***

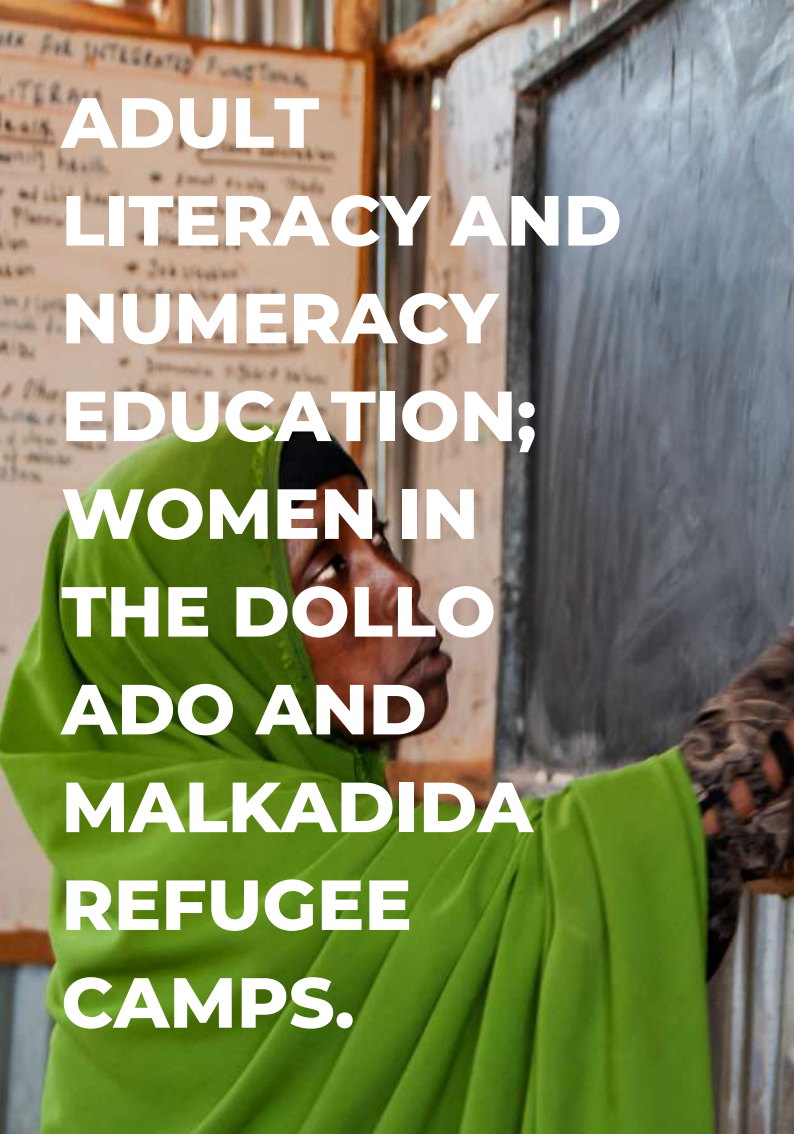
You'll find them on google maps, located within the JRS East Africa compound, in Gitanga Road, Lavington (close to Valley Arcade; behind Maria Immaculata Hospital)

You can find the location of the Mikono Refugee Craft Shop in here:



**Supporting women
to create an
income generating
activity, one of the
main goals of JRS**





**ADULT
LITERACY AND
NUMERACY
EDUCATION;
WOMEN IN
THE DOLLO
ADO AND
MALKADIDA
REFUGEE
CAMPS.**



In Malkadida and Dollo Ado Camps (Ethiopia) there is a very high adult illiteracy rate. There, JRS offers a program on literacy and numeracy, to learn how to read and write. And the immense majority of students are women. But, why?

In Dollo, all the refugee population is of Somali origin, a community well-known for being business oriented. So men tend to stay in the businesses while women (the ones to take care of the numbers and the money) attend the classes.





**However, that is
not always the
same case in
every family...**

The use of *kat* or *mirah* (a chewing drug) among the male population is widely extended. Some men sell the food rations to buy *kat* and give little support to the families. That is why, in many households, the women are the ones **providing for the family.**

JRS has programmes on sports, counseling, among others to fight against this reality.





BURUNDI

This is Mugomoka (28), a preschool teacher in Kavumu Camp, Burundi.

JRS training reinforced our teaching skills, such as how work with the kids through games. [...] It helped me to improve my intellectual and pedagogical skills and encouraged us teachers to continue working with the children. A good teacher should love the children and be empathetic.

BURUNDI

Nabindu Lydia

Congolese**28 years old****Education promotion, awareness raising**

Meet Nabindu, one of the strongest advocates for Education in Kamvuru Camp (Burundi). A leader of thought, a former teacher, a mother and caregiver... in a nutshell: a strong and admirable woman.

Nabindu is a 28 years old refugee from South Kivu, DRC. She is a single mother of 6, and a host mother of 4 orphans. She arrived in Kavumu Refugee Camp in June 2014, running away from the massacre that ended the life of her husband.

"I was a primary teacher in DRC. We fled the village during the massacre of the 6th of June. We crossed to Burundi and soon we were transferred to the camp (Kamuvu)."

“It was hard... we didn't know what was going to happen. We were traumatized. My husband died that day. It was a massacre...”

She is not only a former docent and mother, but a member of the Students' Parents Group [APE], where they received a training on child protection and awareness raising.

"School is the future of tomorrow!" she said repeatedly.



**Nabindu Lydia
in one of the
primary schools
in Kavumu
Refugee Camp
(Burundi)**

"JRS carried out an awareness campaign on school enrolment and nowadays there aren't many children out-of-school." Since Education is offered for free and the UNHCR distributes food rations amongst the community, this has significantly reduced the ratio of child labour in the camp.

"One of the main causes of children to be out-of-school was the lack of monitoring from the parents. That is why, we [APE] raised awareness among the parents in the neighborhood."

"There are many challenges in primary and secondary schools. In secondary, many students drop off. Girls face early marriages and pregnancies... There are many adults who try seduce the girls offering them pads or other goods in exchange of sex. It is still necessary to keep on with the awareness raising campaigns, the school enrollment for girls and counter early marriages and pregnancies."

"We aim at our children to study in good conditions... with good school desks, school stationary and proper classrooms. Children return from school earlier because the classrooms are in very poor condition: it is cold, the rain enters, the children become sick... And the hospital hasn't got medicines."

Nabindu received a JRS training on child protection. *"My mentality changed. For example, regarding the use of violence (hitting) against children at school and at home."*

Nabindu is a big advocator for education within the community in the camp, well known around Kamvuru and very much appreciated among the parents and the education community.



SOUTH SUDAN

This is Ajah (82), a South Sudanese living in Maban (Upper Nile State, South Sudan).

When we met Ajah, she could not even stand by herself. As a response to that, she got some rehabilitation services and a walking frame which she now uses to get around by herself.

ETHIOPIA

Lora

Eritrean

9 years old

Protection and MHPSS for children

Lora was only 10 years old when she arrived to the Child Protection Centre in Addis Ababa.

Original from Eritrea, with no father, her mother left her and her older brother scaping from insecurities in 2015, when she was only 7 years old. The mother scaped to Nairobi.

Lora and her brother were living with their grandparents in Asmara, but they were obsessed with the idea of encountering their mother.

One day, their grandparents gave them some money to buy some things in town, when they saw a bus going to Addis. They thought that from Addis it would be very easy to find a bus to Nairobi and encounter their mother. So they used the money of the grandparents to hop into the bus and ran to the Kenyan capital in search of their mama. But the journey was not as easy as expected...

They reached Addis in the middle of the night, no sign of any bus to Nairobi, no idea where to go, what to do...

They were completely lost. They were 10 and 12 years old by the time.

As these kind of signs of God's will, a good-souled, old Eritrean woman found them in the station. They were able to understand each other because they all spoke the same language.

"Who are you, children? What are you doing here alone?" wondered the old lady. After listening their story, she just took them to her place.

“ The back is black because of the pain and suffering we left behind... the past is dark, and the girl cries... But now, she is looking in front, and she has hope: the small white light in her eyes, because there is hope in her gaze. I have hope in front of me.”

**Painting done
by Lora at the
Art Therapy
sessions in
Addis Ababa**



Next day, the lady brought Lora and her brother to UNHCR, where they were referred to JRS' Child Protection Centre, as the main partner working in child protection.

The children were traumatized: alone, afraid, abandoned... having seen atrocities back home and frustrated for their failed plan.

The first days in CPC they were terrified, they were not able to smile

The CPC made a great job by finding a foster family for them, from Eritrean Origin as well. And engaged them in the Day Care Centre activities at CPC: English classes, music and art therapy, karate... and soon were able to be enrolled into formal school thanks to the support of JRS Case Management team.

The painting in the following pagr was done by Lora one year after their arrival to JRS. When Zemen, the Art Teacher, asked her about it, she explained:

"The back is black because of the pain and suffering we left behind... the past is dark, and the girl cries... But now, she is looking in front, and she has hope: the small white light in her eyes, because there is hope in her gaze. I have hope in front of me."

The children spent 2 yeard in Addis, while the team at CPC were trying to locate their mother and solving the legal issues for them to be accepted to enter in Nairobi.

In 2020 JRS team was able to send the children to Nairobi to encounter their mother. They have been happily together since then.

Sharing common struggles in a male dominated society proves to be a good healing exercise. That is why we have women support groups in South Sudan and throughout the region.



ETHIOPIA

Mahlet Tesfom

Eritrean

26 years old

MHPSS

Mahlet Tesfom is a 26 years old Eritrean refugee. At a young age she was assigned to the military service in a very risky destination. Reason why she decided to run away and cross the frontier to Ethiopia. She went to Hitstats Refugee Camp, in Tigray region, in 2014.

She got two children while in Tigray. After, she found her husband had a second family, leaving her alone with the children.

When the conflict started in Tigray, she was still in the camp.

One midnight a group of soldiers entered the camp shutting their guns towards the sky.

Immediately after the first shoots started, yelling, crying and lots of terrible noises started to come from different directions of the camp. The chaos continued till early in the morning.

While she was trembling with her children at a home alone, their neighbor came to her and quicken her to escape from the camp. The two women with the children run away on foot.

On her journey, while going to look for some water for the children, she was tricked and beaten by a uniformed man. He violently raped her while she was unconscious. Once she woke up again, she had been so severely damaged that she could not even walk.

Seeing her status, the neighbor took her and the children back to the camp, until she would be able to walk again and re-take the road to Addis.

**Refugee and
IDP women in
Tigray waiting
for a food
distribution by
JRS Ethiopia**



After few weeks, she managed to arrive to the Ethiopian capital, where she could get further medical attention. This was early 2021.

As a consequence of the rape, she has been continuously bleeding and no treatment has been found until now. She is still pending to do her HIV test, afraid of what the results might say. This, still today.

Once in Addis, she knew about JRS RCC (Refugee Community Center). There, she's received Psychological First Aid, food items, and sanitary materials (including sanitary pads).

She is still a beneficiary at the MHPSS (mental health and psychosocial support) program in Addis, walking with her trying to overcome -as much as possible- the trauma resulting from the violence and the suffering.

She forwarded her gratitude to JRS, with tears, for the support that she received:

"I was suffocated for those all days because I couldn't get anyone whom I could trust and share my problem. Whenever I think of the situations that happened to me I fill ashamed of myself. But now I am so glad that I could pour out my experience to someone and I am so comforted with the compassion and the support that I received from JRS. Now, I have started to see a glimmer of hope."



**Now, I have started to see a
glimmer of hope.**





SOUTH SUDAN

"I have an orchard in one side of the river, and I sell the food in the market in the other side. Before, crossing was dangerous in rainy season, and had to be done by feet. Now, with the bridge fixed [by JRS] I can use my bike and it is safer and easier to do my business."

UGANDA

Opia Eunice

South Sudanese**19 years old****Education**

Opia Eunice is in Senior Six class (S.6) at St Mary's Assumpta girls Secondary School. She studying a combination of BCM/ICT (Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Information Communication Technology) under the science department. Eunice has been under the JRS scholarship support since 2017 while in her S.2. She resides at Marindi village, Pachara sub-county, Adjumani district, with her siblings, mother and uncle.

In 2017 when Eunice was about to drop out of school, she received the scholarship.

“JRS supported me in school through the scholarship during the time when my mother had failed to pay school fees for me. It has given my mother a sense of relief and joy because she now only has to struggle with the young ones.”

Even with Eunice under the scholarship, her mother still struggles to put the other children in school, though some are out of school for lack of money. Her mother a peasant, like so many others in the community find it hard to get paying work. Along with the scholarship program, JRS provides the students with scholastic materials and hygiene materials while at school. At the moment there are 228 students in Adjumani district under JRS sponsorship, with plans for expansion into neighboring Obongi and Moyo districts.

In Adjumani district, the social cultural environment forces girls to marry at an early age. Many girls fear that once they drop out of school they will end up as teenage mothers.

“ I was afraid that if I dropped out of school my relatives would make me get married. I am not ready for that. I want to study so that I can support my mother and siblings ”

Eunice's greatest fear back in 2017 was ending her education.

“I have been happy from the time I received the scholarship. It kept me in school and made me concentrate in my O' level where I performed well and was given the science combination I wanted. My dream is to study biological sciences and become either a doctor or a pharmacist.”

In Adjumani district, the number of girls who complete secondary level is significantly lower than the number that join in the first year. Retention of girls in schools is key to their education and future.

**Eunice (19)
at the
Science Lab
built by JRS
in Adjumani
Camp
(Uganda)**



SOUTH SUDAN

Odong Ana Anthony

South Sudanese**24 years old****Job and empowerment**

Anna (24) is a South Sudanese young girl currently working at JRS in Juba. She finished her high school in 2013, and due to the harsh economic situation in South Sudan and the high rate of unemployment she had to stay at home for years with her mother. Anna's mother could not sponsor her education to college so Anna was working in her mother's village selling the bread her mother was cooking throughout the night.

In 2018, however, she got an opportunity of doing a casual work as a cook in the weekends at JRS country office in Juba. In 2019 JRS offered Anna a contract, working as a cleaner for six-month. Until, finally, we opened a position as a guard (specially in South Sudan, a male-dominated work field).

I decided not to tell my family or friends I was applying for that job. It is a man's job, so they would have discouraged me... but I said: why not? Why couldn't I do it?

"The way I see it, women are suffering more, because the issues of getting a job for a female... other type of work like constrictions, driving... you may find that men are the one dominating."

**Anna (21) at
her work post
in JRS in Juba
(South Sudan)**



Anna is a young woman in a male-dominated environment, where opportunities for women are less. But Anna was able to make it to be the first security guard in JRS South Sudan country office!!

Thanks to the salary raise she got due to the change of position into a guard, now she can finally pay for her university school fees.

Anna is studying Clinical Medicine during the day and works during the nights as a night guard.

JRS country office gave the necessary support to work and study empowered by creating a job opportunity for her by country office juba. Anna's dream is to work with forcibly displaced people, as she believes that those who are in the refugee camps, they are the ones in more need of support.

"Am now balancing equally with my studies, am no get any difficulties about the tuitions fee because I can get the money I go and pay: I use it for my transportation, photocopying my notes, my school fees... I am not facing big challenges anymore, I am just free"

Anna is not only doing clinical medicine & public health but she is sponsoring her younger sister in secondary school from the same income she makes from her job with JRS.

I am so pleased with JRS... without them I would have not joined my studies

This is Menqitu Wandimo (7). In Kakuma Refugee Camp (Kenya) we offer quality education for children with special needs, as Menqitu.



UGANDA

Kevin Magokua & Hilda Amadrio

South Sudanese**16 and 13 years old****Education**

Kevin Magokua, 16 and Hilda Amadrio, 13 are pupils at Zoka Central Primary School, Maaji II Refugee Settlement. They live in Olwi Village, Itirikwa Sub County, Adjumani District, a location that is at least 7Km from school.

They live with their mother Adeya Angella, and are unaccompanied by any adult on their way to school.

According to the girls, it takes them at least 2 hours to get to school every morning on good weather. "Now that it is the rainy season, at times we have to wait until the rain stops and then move to school." Hilda says the roads become wet and muddy and they have to walk slowly.

The girls say there is no main road from their village and so they use feeder roads that are longer.

"We are late every day, but the teachers are understanding and they let us into the classroom. Most times we arrive tired and hungry, and often miss the first lessons."

Kevin says that they always have to keep catching up on what they have missed in the first hour of school.

The deputy head teacher Guma John Paul applauded the girls as brilliant and obedient, despite the hardship that they go through. He says there are no schools within their home area and so the girls have to attend the closest one which is Zoka Primary School.

“I don’t want to miss school, because it will affect my dreams, I want to become a nurse when I grow up so that I can help my community.”

Hilda says she is determined to stay and continue with her studies despite the long distance.

“If only we had a bicycle that we could use to travel, we would come early to school and not miss out a lot.”

Kevin says the hours they spend on the road are a set back on their studies. She wants to be a teacher when she completes school.

**Kevin (16) and
Hilda (13),
students in
Adjumani**



**We work to fight
against loneliness,
mental health
issues and trauma.**



SOUTH SUDAN

Maryam Alkazi


Sudanese

25 years old


Teacher Training

Maryam Alzaki is a Sudanese refugee woman living in Maban Refugee Camp, South Sudan. The refugee camp brings refugees mainly from Sudan and other IDPs from within the country, running from conflict and war in the region. There are women, children, men, youth and elderly seeking safety and peaceful environment.

Maryam was a teacher and a deputy head teacher in a school in the camp. As part of our community empowerment program, Maryam, as other teachers in the camp, benefited from a Teacher Training program. This, to ensure a good quality and child-friendly education in the camps.



Education is important to the community because it brings many changes and reduces conflict. With education, the people will understand each other peacefully



In Maryam's community, girls in the age of 15 and 16 get married and become mothers at an early age, what challenges their education journey. That is why Maryam considers a proper education to be a key factor for the empowerment of girls prior to their maternity.

When Maryam joined the program in 2019, she was a recently married girl. However, When she had her first child, she had

to quit the program because she could not concile both her motherhood and her studies.,

To be able to cope with that reality, we started offering a Child Care unit refugee along with the Teacher Training courses. Thanks to that, she was able to re-join the program early 2021. Maryam is now attending class, balancing between her responsibilities as a mother and continuing her training and her dream and becoming a leader in her community.

“ When I started studying with JRS I had a baby and at that time I was not able to come and attend the training [...] the training is good because its teaching me to be a good leader in the community... to be a good teacher ”

**Maryam (25)
during an
interview
with JRS**



**Maryam's
daughter (1) at
the Day Care in
Maban while
Maryam attends
Teacher Training
classes**









**VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO
LEARN MORE ABOUT JRS IN
EASTERN AFRICA**



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