



BUILDING RESILIENCE IN CRISIS THROUGH EDUCATION

STORIES



2022

Building Resilience in Crisis
Through Education

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Oxfam and partners and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

Building Resilient Learners, Teachers and Education Systems in South Sudan and Uganda was a 4 year project funded by the European Union through the programme titled 'Building Resilience in Crisis through Education' (BRiCE). The project was designed as a nexus responding to humanitarian crisis and drawing on a developmental approach. The project was implemented in a consortium led by Oxfam in Uganda. The consortium partners included; AVSI Foundation in Uganda, Forum for African Women Educationalists Uganda (FAWEU), Luigi Guissani Institute of Higher Education (LGIHE), and Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU). The project was implemented in Palabek refugee settlement Lamwo District starting 1st March 2018 and ending 28th February 2022. However due to COVID-19, the project received an extension to 31st August 2022 to enable partners to accomplish pending activities.

The overall purpose of the project was to build sustainable, resilient and quality educational opportunities for refugee and displaced children, as well as for those in the host communities in South Sudan and Northern Uganda. The primary aim was to improve access to quality primary education for learners between the ages of 6 and 18 years in both

non-formal and formal education systems, to build their resilience and provide them with life skills which enable them play an active citizenship role, to prevent conflict, and to enable learners acquire technical capacities and lead productive lives. At the same time, the project applied a System Strengthening Approach (SSA.)

The total project budget in Uganda was Euros 2,415,378 [Oxfam in Uganda €785,198; AVSI €753,771; FAWEU €298,701; UNATU €267,921 and LGIHE €309,787.]

PROJECT FLAGSHIP INTERVENTION AREAS AND RESULTS

DELIVERY OF ACCELERATED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (AEP)

Accelerated Education (AE) is a flexible, Age-appropriate programme, run in an accelerated time frame, which aims to provide access to certified education for disadvantaged, over-age, out-of-school children and adolescents aged between 10-18 years – particularly those who missed out on, or had their education interrupted due to poverty, marginalization, conflict, and crisis. The goal of AE is to provide learners with certified competencies for basic education and learning in a condensed manner using

approaches that match their level of cognitive maturity. AE in Uganda is under the Department of Inclusive and Special Needs Education at the Ministry of Education and Sports and is categorized as non-formal education. AE is also a key programme in Uganda's Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities.

AVSI Foundation in Uganda implemented the AE model in Palabek refugee settlement, Lamwo District. The model targeted both refugee and host community children in the schools within Ogili Subcounty in Palabek refugee settlement. The model delivery was 2-fold: delivering a 3-year condensed primary education for older learners (12-18 years) and developing a curricula for a bridging course for younger learners (6-12 years). The bridging course served as a short-term targeted language acquisition course that provided access to a safe-space and supported younger refugee children with basic skills and strategies for a successful entry into and continuation in the formal education system.

The main activities conducted included among others identification of AEP centres and teachers, enrolment of learners, and support to teaching through provision of scholastic materials. These activities were implemented with a hope of improving the learners' situation in the following ways:

- **Increased enrolment rate**
- **Decreased drop-out rate**
- **Learners and teachers feel better prepared to withstand shocks, stresses and uncertainties**



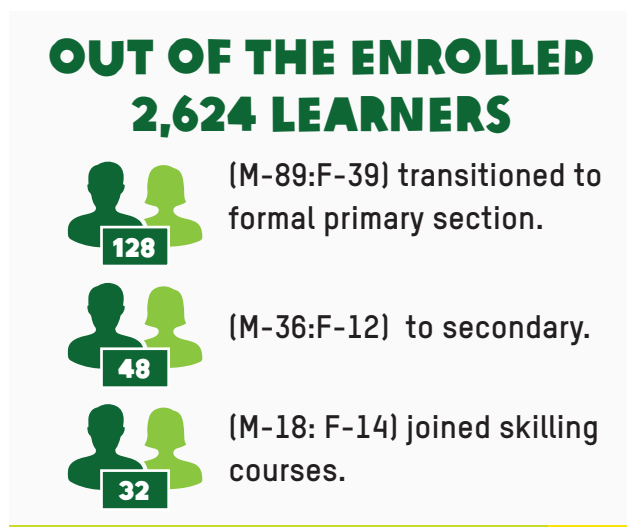
Despite the COVID-19 interruptions, the project partners in collaboration with various stakeholders established and supported 4 AEP Centres. 20 schools were supported with improved teaching practices. The project enrolled 2,624 refugee and host community children into AEP and bridging courses (1,765 AEP learners; 859 Bridging course learners). Out of the 2,624 learners 72% were Refugees and 28% Nationals. Out of the 87 AE learners who were eligible to sit for PLE exams, 84 sat and completed Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) giving a 95% completion rate. **Notwithstanding the COVID-19 challenges the project also managed to decrease the dropout rate to 24%.**

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AEP LEARNERS TRANSITION

The main aim of AEP was to encourage learners to transition to other education levels. Whenever appropriate, the AE learners shifted from AEP to formal primary section. This for example happened after completion of level one, where after a learner could move to P.4 of the formal section. AE learners could also choose to move to vocational skills training after completion of any level. However, most of the learners chose to complete all three AEP levels and subsequently join secondary education.

Out of the enrolled 2,624 learners 128 (M-89:F-39) transitioned to formal primary section, 48 (M-36:F-12) to secondary, while while 32 (M-18: F-14) joined skilling courses.



ALP SUPPORT DURING COVID19 LOCKDOWN

The advent of COVID-19 brought in new challenges for schools and learners in particular. With the closure of schools, the consortium had to re-program to adjust to the situation and demonstrate that Oxfam and partners were able to adapt to the crisis. In collaboration with other stakeholders, the consortium distributed personal protection equipment, established community-based learning, provided PSS to teachers and learners, and introduced home-learning packages. Teachers were supported with bicycles to follow up learners within their villages/blocks and teach in the villages. Social workers supported the most vulnerable learners during the crisis to ensure that they did not drop out of school. Participation rates in the community learning were high, and in spite of the pandemic, many girls subsequently sat for primary school exams. In light of COVID-19, the project managed to ensure the upkeep of capitation grants to schools despite school closure. Likewise, a study documenting the impact of COVID-19 on school going girls and young women was conducted.

GENDER AND CONFLICT SENSITIVE EDUCATION: RETENTION OF PREGNANT GIRLS AND YOUNG MOTHERS



The BRiCE project was designed to meet the needs of girls and women, as well as boys and men, with particular interventions to address harmful gender norms and stereotypes. Female learners in particular face multiple challenges to access and complete their education. Many girls drop out of school as a result of unplanned teenage pregnancies, while a majority are forced or encouraged to marry at teenage age for bride price. For those who remain in school, the challenges of menstrual hygiene can become overwhelming.

To counteract these challenges, the BRiCE project engaged senior female teachers to provide counselling, support, and reassurance to girls on their right to go to school, and engaged with schools to create and set up gender sensitive facilities such as safe spaces where girls may wash and change clothes, alleviate the inconvenience

and stigma of menstruation. Menstruation kits with sanitary towels and spare clothes were distributed to some girls. Spaces for teenage mothers to breastfeed babies were also created. The teachers conducted home visits to encourage and provide psycho-social support to pregnant and lactating learners to give them hope that they were accepted back at school. Above all, the project carried out awareness sessions for boys on what their female peers go through, including engaging them in making of reusable sanitary towels. Likewise, the project, through its social workers, encouraged enrolment, especially of girls, and advocated for pregnant girls to return to school.

The end of project evaluation alludes to the fact that the project contributed to change and influenced gender norms regarding gender equality in general, girls' access to education, ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy.

The findings from a study commissioned by the project on the impact of COVID-19 on school going girls and young women informed "Revised Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Teenage Pregnancy Framework" under the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In emergency education situations, certified and uncertified teachers are typically unprepared to enter the classroom and address the needs of children affected by

crisis. At the same time, teachers themselves are affected by the crisis yet they are still key to delivering quality and protective education. In such situations, teachers may need support to understand how the new situation impacts their role as teachers, refresh teaching methods and what they can do to best support their learners who are often faced with multiple challenges. To address these challenges, the project contextualized the INEE - Teachers in Crisis Contexts (TiCC) training packages to build basic teaching competencies for new or inexperienced teachers in crisis contexts. The model was built around sustained support to teachers through a mixed model approach combining training with supervision and peer to peer learning.

The training package was adapted to the specific needs identified by the implementing partners and in collaboration with local stakeholders (like District Education Officials, local PTC trainers, local facilitators and teachers.) The contextualization process was also informed by the teacher needs assessment that was conducted at the beginning of the project at Palabek refugee settlement. The training pack was integrated with an introductory module with the specific aim of helping teachers re-discover the aims of education, reflect on their role as educators and motivate them to face learners with positivity in the challenging situation on the ground.

The TEPD pack had four core modules, developed around a simplified set of teacher competencies. The training pack materials

were intended to support teachers' progress towards development of their competencies, many of which required longer term experience and professional development support to fully implement.

A pool of 12 TPD Tutors/facilitators were trained and rolled out trainings to 462 (M-305: F-157) teachers in Uganda. In addition, the project supported teachers to group themselves into teacher learning cycles (TLCs) for purpose of peer to peer learning among the teachers. Peer coaching is a concept where fellow teachers within a school were able to learn good practices from one another in order to improve their teaching practices and general wellbeing. The activity created a community of learners among teachers to innovate skills and strategies in order to motivate themselves to improve and find new solutions to the challenges they face in daily life. The end evaluation found that 81% of teachers reported using participatory methods as well as gender- and conflict-sensitive approaches to "a great or some extent." This finding was confirmed by learners.



IMPROVED SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT

The main purpose of the activities was to strengthen the capacity of the school management structures and build their resilience. School management was taken in a broad sense to include: Head Teachers, School Management Committees (SMCs), Parents and Teachers Associations (PTA), and teachers. The combination of capacity development, and peer-to-peer was contextualised to each school's needs, meaning that in some schools the focus was on establishing/revitalizing school management structures, while in other schools, the systems were in place but needed additional knowledge or advice. A capacity development model on data collection and management for conflict sensitive school management was developed to contribute to stabilising, rebuilding or building the education system through strengthening institutional systems (e.g. information management systems) and staff capacity and competencies. 239 (M-150:F-89) SMCs and PTAs had their capacities enhanced in leadership and participation in social dialogue. A section of them were taken for a learning exchange at Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya.

ADVOCACY AND STRENGTHENED TEACHER UNION.

As a way of enhancing teachers' resilience, the project put focus on strengthening the Uganda National Teachers' Union to contribute to increased wellbeing and promotion of teachers' rights specifically those who teach in schools within the refugee settlements. UNATU conducted capacity-building workshops on membership recruitment and advocacy for the rights of refugee teachers.

UNATU developed an advocacy strategy focused on influencing specific teacher policies especially on the inclusion of issues of education in conflict and crisis in the Education Sector Plan and the inclusion of teachers in social dialogue. One concrete output has been UNATU's input in the National Teacher Policy. UNATU also initiated the process of reviewing the teachers' code of conduct to capture issues regarding teachers serving in refugee settings.

LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE PROJECT.

1. AE has proved to be an alternative education programme that meets the needs of persons who have lost years of education.

239 (M-150:F-89) SMCS AND PTAS HAD THEIR CAPACITIES ENHANCED IN LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL DIALOGUE



2. Specific interventions targeting to increase the number of qualified female teachers to influence the gender-based stereotypes are needed.
3. AE can be an appropriate strategy for the re-integration of teenage mothers.
4. There is a need to design special and inclusive interventions for teenage mothers and children with disabilities- such as Cash for Education Voucher system.
5. There is a need to strengthen transitional pathways for the alternative AE graduates. AE learners should be supported to transition and possibly complete secondary and vocational education.
6. Social workers/community workers are important for ensuring close follow up with learners
7. The sustained TEPD model really worked but the peer to peer learning takes time to build trust for teachers to open



**THE GIRLS SHAPING
PALABEK**





“Children often made fun of my size because I towered over them and I found this disturbing and very uncomfortable, I rarely enjoyed school because I felt out of place.”

Nineteen-year-old Monica Aling, a soft spoken and composed girl who stands at 5’8ft and her stature

commands attention. She came from Kyangwali to Palabek Refugee Settlement and when she joined the mainstream primary five class, it was even more difficult for her to study. Her height drew the attention of learners in her school and she left.

In 2019, Monica heard from a friend about the Accelerated Education Program in the same block she lived and decided to enroll in term 1 level 2.

“Joining the Accelerated Education Program was good for me because it was not about my size anymore and we concentrated on assignments and in less than two years I sat for my Primary Leaving Examinations.”

Monica completed her final exams, something that had started to feel unattainable. She also benefited from life skills sessions conducted by AVSI and this propelled her in a direction of self-discovery. With a shy but confident smile, she expresses her dream to become a mason and a truck driver - a multi skilled woman because she wants to do just that.

“Attending the life skills training debunked the myth that some activities are only for men and the sole difference between us is the ability to conceive, the rest is a matter of choice and this is why I like construction.”

Monica is currently enrolled at Don Bosco Youth Centre in Palabek where she is learning construction and masonry as she waits for her final results of the Accelerated Education Program.



PETER PACHOK

“ Before I joined the Accelerated Education Program, school felt like an inconvenience because my friends and I were taller than our other classmates. I often felt embarrassed when the smaller children made fun of us. ”

Peter Pachok is a forthcoming and bubbly character; her now well-spoken English wasn't the case in the past. After fleeing to Uganda from South Sudan, she joined level 2 in the Accelerated Education Program and did not speak English - she predominantly communicated in Arabic.

But when Peter enrolled into the Accelerated Education Program, she was provided with books and other scholastic materials which helped revive her passion for reading and she completed her final exams in two years, and later applied for a translation job at Awich Health Centre II in Lamwo District. Peter was one of three candidates selected out of eight applicants for the translation placement. She is passionate about her job as she interprets for pregnant mothers from Arabic to English. And now her eyes are set on becoming a mid-wife.

Thanks to the funding from the European Union, in 2019, 1,018 students benefited from the Advanced Education Program through the Building Resilience in Crisis through Education project implemented by OXFAM IBIS in a consortium with AVSI Foundation.



Peter Pachok on one of her translation jobs at Awich Health Centre II in Lamwo District.



DIGITALIZING PALABEK





“

I first interacted with a computer in my Senior Four class and fell in love with it. When I dropped out of school I missed it a lot and I always told myself I would cherish any opportunity that would come along and master it.

”

KENNETH LAWOKO

Kenneth is a modest 23-year-old youngster living in Palabek Refugee Settlement in Northern Uganda. Early in February 2010, he traveled to Uganda from South Sudan alongside his elder brother as they sought a better education. It was seven years later when his family joined them as they fled insurgencies in their country. Kenneth was fortunate to study via scholarships but his luck ran out after he completed his Senior Four national examinations.

“I couldn’t join Senior Five because I failed to raise the tuition and all my scholarship applications were turned down.”

When Kenneth saw an advert on a poster requesting for applications, he beamed with joy because he fitted in the 18-24 years age bracket.

“I got a confirmation call two months after applying inviting me to Don Bosco Youth Centre to start the training. We started out with learning about entrepreneurship and computer theory which rekindled my memory of computer class in school.”

Three months down the road Kenneth can edit and tweak pictures in photoshop, edit videos using Premiere Pro software, make Power Point Presentations and handle data collection in Microsoft Excel.



“After all this exposure and knowledge I’ve got, I dream to become a video editor and own my photo studio, because wherever people are, they need photoshop for their pictures.”

Richard is a very reserved lad. His soft tone of voice is a perfect match for his exuding calm persona. He lives with his mother in Apyetta South,

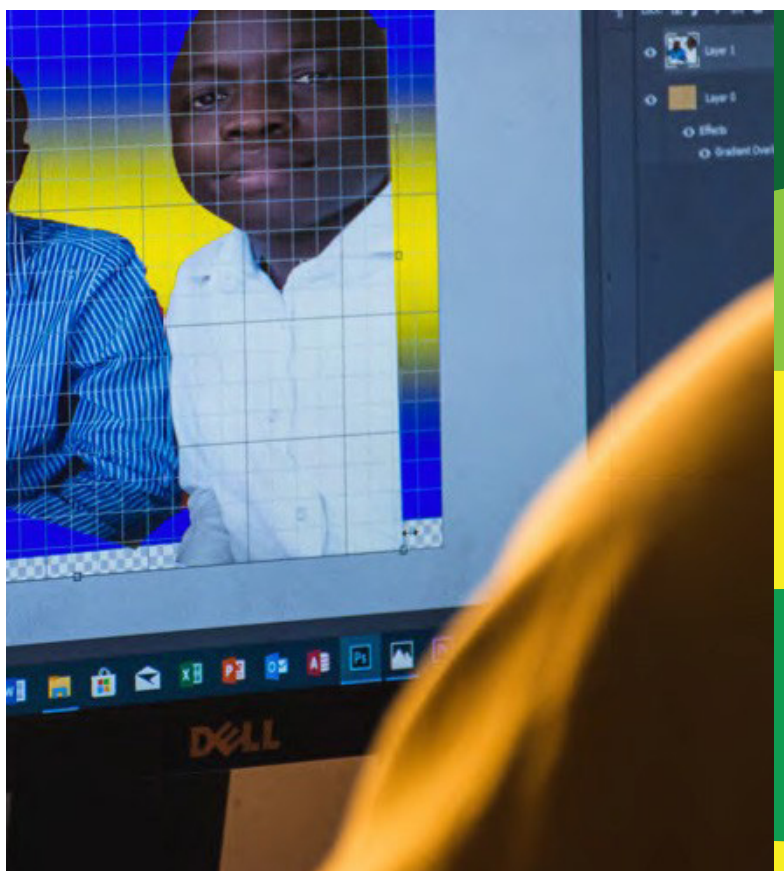
Palabek Ogili Sub County. After his Senior Four national examinations, he lacked tuition to go for further studies and decided to cultivate people’s gardens with his friends in the community to earn some money. As noble as this gesture was, it only led him down a dark path of drinking and passing time being unproductive.

“Because of our poor farming practices, the crops we would grow were often of poor yield and we were not even able to make enough money to share between us.”

One day as Richard moved in the Settlement, he found an AVSI staff sharing with a young boy about an opportunity to get skilled in computer skills at Don Bosco Youth Centre.



RICHARD OYET



“

I always wondered how posters and graphics were designed but right now I am happy that I can design my very own.

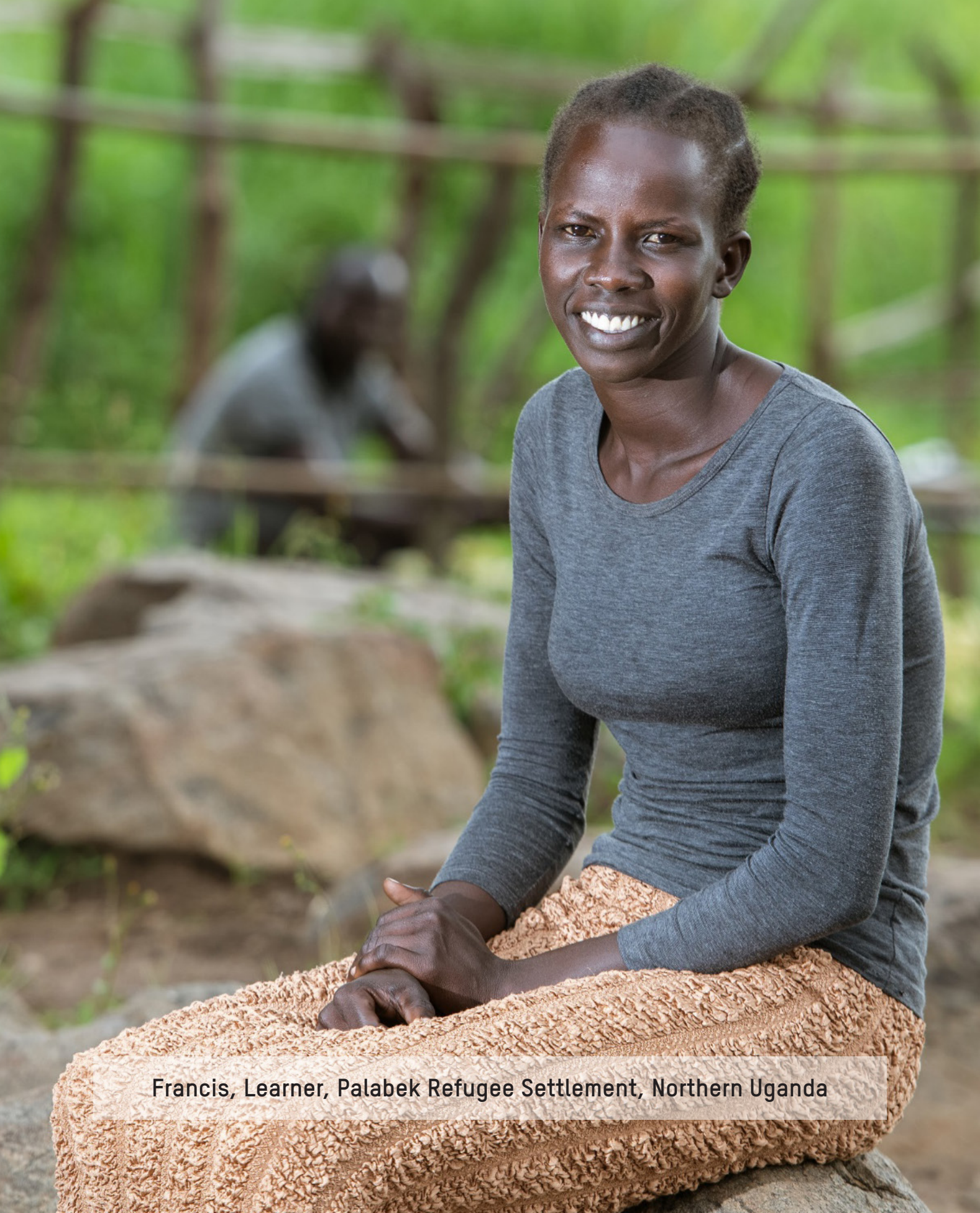
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“I drew in closer and joined the conversation and by the end of the day I had already signed up and sent through my application.”

Being tired of the frustrating lifestyle forced Richard to try something new, and when he was shortlisted, it was exciting for him because he knew there were many people that had applied for the same position.

“I learnt how to manage a business and draw a business plan. I also learnt how to do data entry using Microsoft Excel. Now my typing speed is between 30-40 words per minute.”

When Richard started the course, he made new friends and many of whom were South Sudanese. “I used to fear people from South Sudan and avoided associating with them. This training at Don Bosco has left me with a new set of focused friends and my thinking has changed a lot.”



Francis, Learner, Palabek Refugee Settlement, Northern Uganda



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