

IMPACT STORY

LAADI LUCAS



Photo credits : UN Women Cameroon

Laadi Lucas already training other women at the Minawao refugee camp

Laadi Lucas, highly respected refugee at the Minawao refugee camp in the Far North

The Minawao refugee camp is in the Far North region of Cameroon. More than 60,000 people have settled here since 2013 after fleeing the abuses of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Laadi Lucas fled her native village in Pulka, Borno State in Nigeria, with her brother. Due to the crisis, she dropped out from school and had no option but to get married at the age of 18. She now has three children. The memories of the attack nine years ago are still vivid in her mind.

“When members of Boko Haram attacked my village in Nigeria, my entire family dispersed in a scramble for safety. My father went his own way, my mother did the same, and I was left with my brother with whom I fled to the Far North Region of Cameroon. When we got here, there was no one to assist us, neither was there anyone to provide me with a job even as a domestic assistant. I was left with no other option than to drop out of school and get married so that I and my brother will survive. We got registered at the Minawao refugee camp and that is when we gradually started receiving lifesaving assistance.”

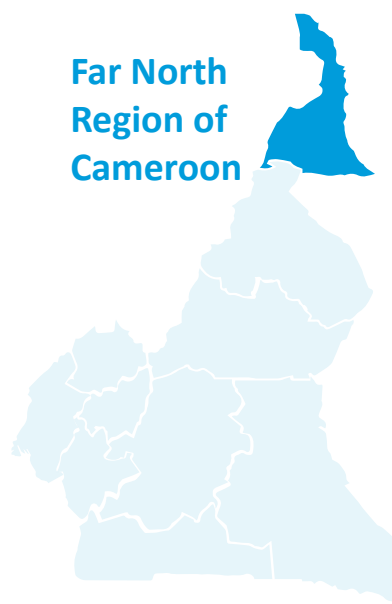
“At the refugee camp, while they give us basic food commodities, most of the time we must buy the remaining things to prepare the food such as cooking salt or even food items for a meal. Whenever food items got finished at home, i would not be able to buy some. I would not have the money to purchase condiments like cubes, onion and other necessities for a meal.”

When Laadi was informed about the SCE programme by her husband, it turned out to be a game-changer. *“I was informed about the Second Chance Education for women by my husband who encouraged me to get registered. During the training, I opted to do tailoring because I have always loved to be a designer. I used to admire women with beautiful African fabrics. I was taught how to mount a sewing machine, how to repair and maintain it when it gets bad, how to design male and female dresses, how to save money and how to interact with other women at the camp and in the community.”* During the training, Laadi received the necessary support from her husband, adding that he was extremely excited when she received a sewing machine at the end of the training to the extent that he bought candies for all their children to celebrate the big achievement.

“Until I had the opportunity for SCE, I was a stay-at-home wife with nothing to do. I can now support my family. I now design and sew clothes and dresses for myself, my husband and my children, while making a living from the craft. I aspire to complete my education someday and have the opportunity to transfer the knowledge I have to the younger generation.” Laadi beams in ecstasy as she narrates how the SCE has greatly improved not only her self-esteem, but her value in the community as well.

“Before now, nobody would call or invite me for a program in the community, but after realizing that I am empowered financially and that I can go to the market and purchase whatever I need, community members now invite me to witness ceremonies like weddings, naming ceremonies and more. When I get to these occasions, I make financial contributions, I talk boldly, and I am well respected.” In expressing her gratitude for the project, Laadi reveals that she is currently assisting four of her struggling friends with whom she suffered before joining the SCE programme.

Far North Region of Cameroon



From 2019 to 2023, UN Women’s Second Chance Education (SCE) and Vocational Learning Programme, executed through UN Women’s Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (LEAP) initiative, offered refugee and internally displaced women in the conflict-affected areas of Cameroon, along with vulnerable women from host communities, training and learning opportunities in entrepreneurial, employment and life skills. SCE was implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF), reaching over 12,000 participants across seven regions: the Far North, East, Adamawa, Littoral, Canter, Northwest and Southwest. SCE’s main objective is for more marginalized women to have access to, participate in and achieve quality learning, entrepreneurial and employment outcomes.

SCE’s approach recognizes that, for women who are marginalized by crisis, poverty or harmful social norms, transformational change requires more than the offer of training or education alone. SCE works with women who have been held back by gender-based barriers and discriminatory practices all their lives without necessarily being aware of it. SCE provides access to practical support and life skills training that enable women to participate fully in whichever learning pathway they choose. Similarly, it recognizes the importance of social learning and personalized support throughout the the SCE journey. This scaffolded global approach has led to high retention and low dropout rates.