



Jesuit Worldwide Learning

Higher Education at the Margins

## Research Report

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# Higher Education nurturing Agents of Change at the Margins

## Meet Dorine: a relentless effort towards gender equality in Kakuma Refugee Camp

This research seeks to evaluate the impact of graduates of the Diploma in Liberal Studies (accredited by Regis University, USA, and delivered by JWL) on their respective communities through the perspectives of community members, by focusing on five case studies in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya. In this first case study, we introduce the story of Dorine and her commitment to the community, particularly in regard to ending sexual and gender-based violence and promoting gender equality. By analysing the voice of community members, this report demonstrates how Dorine's unique characteristics, looking at her skills and personality traits, and strong community engagement reveal her as a role model and source of empowerment in her community.

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## 1. Introduction

Dorine, originally from Uganda, grew up in Kakuma Refugee Camp. In 2019, she graduated from JWL's Diploma in Liberal Studies (accredited by Regis University, USA), with a major in social work. After graduation, she joined the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) as a community caseworker supervisor focusing on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). She recently moved to South Sudan to work for Andre

Food South Sudan to fight child and community malnutrition.

This research report tells Dorine's story and her impact in Kakuma nurtured by her higher education studies, from the perspective of the people who met her, engaged with her, and whose lives she transformed. This report allows us to hear directly from the voices of her community, as the research team interviewed family members, colleagues, clients and neighbours.



Figure 1: Meet Dorine



## 2. A personality and skills nurtured by higher education

The report first identifies how Dorine's community members perceived her personality traits (commitment, humanity, sense of care for others, courage and passion), skills (critical thinking, communication, problem-solving and leadership skills), and the role of the Diploma in nurturing these unique traits.

### 2.1 Committed

One of the most prominent traits cited by community members is the commitment she puts into her community endeavours and her work with the Danish Refugee Council. One respondent articulated this trait as a direct growth from the Diploma programme:

*"Actually, before [the Diploma] she was not committed in the community [...], but right now, she's actually participating creating awareness reporting cases, reporting [...] rape cases in the community, which actually improves the community."* (KKD1)

The depth of her commitment is unveiled in her fearlessness and readiness to always support her community members and go the extra mile:

*"This is something unique about her like others in the community, if something happened, nobody will bother to go into that matter, people are afraid, or people are so busy, but for her, she used to stop whatever she's doing and going to solve that relevant issue that is coming her way."* (KKD5)

With her dedication, Dorine is always able to support her community members and build trust which singled her out from the rest of the people in the community (KKD4).

### 2.2 Humane and caring

This commitment to her community reflects her sense of humanity and care for others. It was mentioned that she would do anything possible to ensure a person seeking her help is effectively assisted:

*"I told you, after graduating she builds that sense of humaneness, by having that concern for a person, like she's so sympathetic with people by wanting to know what kind of a problem is this person facing? Or how can I help as an SGBV worker? And if I am not in a position to help, who can I refer this case to? So that this person can get help. And there was a time a certain girl who was rape, she took the initiative of taking the girl [...] from the hospital to police station. You don't have money for transport and how did you manage to move this girl from Kakuma 2 to the police station? And she said giving to the community needs a lot of energy or a kind of sacrifice".* (KKD4)

This constant care for others is further revealed by Dorine standing up as the voice of the voiceless and embracing equality values in her daily community actions:



**"She's perceived in a way that she's like a voice to the voiceless. An agent of change and an advocate to some of our young girls and women and men also. And she has a sense of equality and sense of humanity and a mind of equality, she does not get anybody segregated and anybody is treated equally."**

– KKD4



### 2.3 Courageous

Building on her dedication to her community and sense of humanity, Dorine used her courage to challenge the male-dominated culture in her community:

*"Yes, Dorine [...] reported actually a rape case. Unlike other women in our society, let me say, in our society we are culturally dominated by men. But Dorine nowadays as a woman, she can actually report a man that brings out her courage in that women are not supposed to be dominated by men." (KKD2)*

This boldness and confidence that Dorine has in being a woman who advocates for women's rights and fights against SGBV in the community have been described by community members as nurtured by the Diploma in Liberal Studies:

*"After her graduation, [...] I can actually see a lot of changes in her behaviours that Dorine initially was a culturally dominated woman, however, nowadays, with her job, and I think through her studies, she has actually changed even her attitudes towards the community. And she's actually a strong woman who advocates for equality and [against] sexual harassment. She's actually very, very, very committed to her tasks." (KKD2)*

### 2.4 Passionate

Dorine's passion drives her to help her community members fight SGBV. One interviewee highlighted that no one has reported SGBV cases and refer to adequate services and support networks with the same passion before:

*"Actually, the difference that nobody can be able to create awareness in this community as she's doing right now. Nobody will be able to report [rape] cases [...], and also following up cases*

*which are affecting the community. And also, she's there to ensure that the community members are actively engaging themselves in prevention of SGBV in the community. No one like I said can do that with passion." (KKD1)*

She constantly seeks to support her community members without being pushed to do so:

*"She is passionate to help people of our community and different communities at large, because if you have passion [...], it will lead you, you are always being driven by that passion you have that is being self-driven. You don't need any supervision, you do it wholeheartedly and that is what I see her doing." (KKD4)*

This passion makes her community engagement unique and impactful. Beside specific personality traits, the community also mentioned skills or existential competences that emerged in Dorine as a consequence of her higher education studies.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.5 Leader

Through Dorine's commitment to take action in her community, participants portray her as a leader:

*"I see her as an agent of change. Because she can speak up or she can speak to people and people hear her out. And the words she speaks to people are also seen through in her actions. So, it's like she has that voice of being a leader." (KKD4)*

This is further developed through Dorine's positive mindset, setting an example for other community members to follow her footsteps in helping the community:

*"[...] she is that somebody who believe in everything, she believes nothing is very hard to*

<sup>1</sup> Honen-Delmar, M. and Rega, I. (2021). A Journey towards Empowerment: The impact of Liberal Studies on graduates and their communities. Research Report #02. Jesuit Worldwide Learning



be solve, [...] people in the community view her as an example. [...] she can be able to handle issues, no matter how tough it is, she'll always look for ways to stop it. And as a community now, we have learned to appreciate ourselves because we believe now when we are together and [do] teamwork, we can be able live a normal life in our communities." (KKD5)

The community stressed that she is a courageous leader who strives for change whether in her personal, family or community life, always acting on her words:

"Having that sense of humanity. She builds that mindset of being a leader, [...], you want to make change in your personal life and the life of anyone around you. So, she's someone who really made a great change, like in the family, outside, and anywhere where she speaks. She

has that kind of leadership, she speaks with an authentic voice, that she speaks and shows actions afterwards, that people may not doubt." (KKD4)

## 2.1 Communicator

Community members highlighted Dorine's effective communication skills, allowing her to exchange in various contexts with diverse interlocutors:

"Not many people of her age have the same kinds of characteristics as the way she has because she's a person who has gone to school. First thing, [...] she speaks very clearly and almost everyone in the community understands her. She can speak to visitors and also speak the mother tongue that we all can hear." (KKD3)



Figure 2: Dorine conducting workshop for her community members



Dorine's exceptional communication skills have been denoted by one specific community participant who established that neighbouring communities are still struggling with SGBV due to a lack of vocal and effectively active persons to address this in their community:

*"So, you see other communities are still struggling in such cases [SGBV]. Because they don't have a vocal person who directly works with them, they might have one person, but the person is not as good as Dorine. The way Dorine works in her community, people have taken her as a mother or as a sister or as a friend. Because she makes things easy. She understands people, people understand her. So, when they come and see her work in her community it is very, very recommendable."* (KKD3)

## 2.2 Problem-solver and critical thinker

Dorine's problem-solving and critical thinking skills are pointed out as unique, differentiating her from the rest of her community:



**"there are problems we encountered in the community that only she is the one who can solve it. Not everyone has that psychology, [...] her psychology enables her to understand each and every person in the community."**

– KKD3

As one of the participants reported, whenever she foresees a problem, she always calls for a community meeting and engages the entire community to identify and implement measures that may resolve the problem

(KKD3). One community respondent further illustrated how effective Dorine problem-solving skills are by sharing his own experience:

*"My interaction with her is, before I used to have so many problems. And nowadays, if I go take the problem to Dorine, we can have a solution. [...] So, everything I'm doing in my business, with my friends, at least nowadays I have someone to go after."* (KKD1)

Dorine's critical thinking skills have also been identified as key in enabling her to positively contribute to the community:

*"Let's assume like in terms of thinking and problem solving and being a team leader. These are some of the abilities, I believe now that Dorine has, [she] understood who she is, and understand also what the community is. So, she understands that her contribution to the community is very powerful. So, with her voice, together with the voice of the rest of the community, anything is possible."* (KKD5)

One participant revealed that her problem-solving skills and critical thinking come as a result of her Diploma studies:

*"She used to be someone who is too quarrelsome, [...]. But since she learned how to solve problems, to be a critical thinker, to be a leader [...] So, she's always strong."* (KKD4)

Therefore, through the Diploma, Dorine was able to develop diverse characteristics, such as critical thinking, problem-solving and communication skills, in addition to nurturing her profound orientation toward the care of others and revealing her leadership and courage. These traits are now benefiting the community through her exceptional community engagement.



Figure 3: Dorine's community members

### 3. Improving living conditions in Kakuma: towards a more inclusive and gender-sensitive community

Dorine's community members have depicted her willingness and capacity to improve living conditions in her community through different forms of community engagement, specifically in relation to gender equality and financial accessibility, prompting her to be perceived as a role model by her community.

#### 3.1 Active Engagement

The active involvement of Dorine in her community has been associated with the Diploma programme, as she became a

bridge between the organisation she worked with (the Danish Refugee Council) and the community:

*"Before she joined the Diploma programme, [...], she wasn't that close with the community members but since she graduated with a diploma in social work with Regis University, she started working with the community. First of all, she volunteered as a chair lady, a block leader in our community. And later on, she joined working with the community through Danish Refugee Council, after graduation. So up to now she's working for the same organisation as SGBV worker in the community. So, she interacts a lot with people in the community with different cases and she refers the case to the line manager [...] so, she has that sense of humaneness that is the greatest change I've seen from her.. (KKD4)*

Outside of the workplace, Dorine is said to actively be engaged in the development of the community. Even though she has



family commitments, she still engages in community clean-ups and other events:

*"[...] she is committed to her work. [...] she is very much involved in the development of the community. She is also viewed as a good mother and [...], always working hard to provide for the family. She is helpful in that she provides her equipment during community clean-up things like wheelbarrow and sometimes her gumboots and anything she actually has at home." (KKD1)*

The respondents also stated that Dorine serves as an advisor that anyone can turn to when there is either a personal or community issue:

*"Actually, she's also someone who can advise and counsel the person who is actually has problem mentally, and also emotionally. And also following cases, [...] she's also always taking her job and making sure that she can do her best to settle the issues in the community." (KKD1)*

### 3.2 Gender equality

This active community involvement has been demonstrated as having a considerable impact in making a safer and gender-sensitive community. The community members asserted that due to Dorine's efforts to make SGBV reporting mechanisms more accessible to members of the community, cases of such crimes are decreasing, improving the overall level of gender equality (KKD3). Another respondent highlighted that Dorine's efforts have significantly influenced the community's views on SGBV, building gender rights awareness and respect in the marital relationship:

*"With that case being solved I can see there is a positive consequence whereby the man can go and tell other men outside there that they don't need to beat their wives. But let's communicate. Let's talk and things might get easier." (KKD3)*

Moreover, the community has positively acknowledged Dorine as the best liaison between community members and various entities including the government, police, and organisations working within the camp to eradicate SGBV. Respondents asserted that their community would be worse off if it weren't for Dorine:



*"I think it would be being worse, I remember years back when we did not have case protection officers and so forth. It was very hard like women were not getting chance to go to school. These were some of the things, there was also forced marriage [...] Dorine [is] now serving as a bridge whereby you can channel your information to them. And if they cannot be able to help you, this whereby the issue can go to the relevant authorities. So, for her, I think that she is playing [...] one of the biggest roles, making the work and reporting to be easier here."*

– KKD5

Besides facilitating the process of SGBV case reporting, she helps youth to embrace gender equality in their community culture:

*"She also holds community advocacy with boys and drop-out boys and girls from school that is sensitising them on the roles and responsibilities of boys and girls. Because sometimes we have [...] gender stereotypes. In a family, 'you'll find out that a boy is not supposed to wash utensils. He's not supposed to cook, but in our community in our society currently all works with anyone. Yeah, so by doing so, she pumps some sense into our boys' minds." (KKD4)*



Her teachings to embrace equality are implemented at the heart of her practice. As noted by this participant, Dorine raises awareness that men are also vulnerable to SGBV:

*"The kind of people who learn from her are the girls, dropout girls from school. The women, the women who are being violated, let me say married women mostly. Yeah, some men also [are] violated because there was a man who came to our place. In particular, the man came, and his arm was broken. The man reported to her that he was beaten by the wife. And I was like can a woman also beat a man to this level? So, she was like, listen in SGBV cases, it doesn't mean it's the men who beat the women only, it's both sides. Like both genders are vulnerable." (KKD4)*

Additionally, community members reported that through her actions, women now have an equal voice as men in the community, which also resulted in an increased number of women participating in the leadership structure as chairladies:

*"Before people believed that if an issue has to be solved, it has to be men alone. But since Dorine started her work, I have seen her. Now she works hand in hand with security and community leaders and through her action and through the way she initiates and does her work, it's kind of motivated people to say that not only do men become the source of the solution even women too have a voice, so, this one now has encouraged women, now you can see chairladies, we have everything and this one come as result of a woman like Dorine raising her voice." (KKD4)*

This shift in perspective toward women in leadership positions is seen as provoking radical change in what the role of women could be toward solving community problems:

*"Many of the time, [...] nobody believes in women [...] to be people who are capable of solving*

*problems. So, whenever problems arise in the community, people usually turn to the side of men. [W]henver a man is not available [to solve issues], nobody will listen. But right now, you can find a woman [and she] can be able to handle a case, like the way Dorine used to do. So, now [...] they believe[...] she can do what men does." (KKD5)*

Thus, Dorine's actions to eradicate SGBV and foster equality between men and women are improving the lives of community members.

### 3.3 Accessibility and affordability in the community

Community participants stressed that their community would be worse off if it weren't for Dorine and the entrepreneurship skills she developed during the Diploma programme (KKD2). She set up a convenience shop so that the community can access food items without having to travel long distances, that used to be as far as 20 kilometres (KKD1). This participant highlighted how Dorine's shop made the food items more accessible, affordable and safer for the community:

*"the community [is] now benefiting from her, are actually reducing the costs of transport from the community members going far to buy goods which is actually dangerous, and also consuming time and also money. And right now, they are getting things from Dorine's shop." (KKD1)*

Therefore, her shop is seen as a helping the lives of community members to be more accessible and affordable by providing daily necessities in a cost and time-efficient fashion, ultimately contributing to improving the safety and wellbeing of her community members.



### 3.4 Role model

Dorine’s willingness to improve the living conditions of her community led her to emerge as a role model for both women and men in the eyes of her community, embodying the Jesuit value of being “men and women for others”.

Many community members reported that Dorine is someone that everyone looks up to:



“Dorine actually acts as a role model to everyone and around men are [...] looking up to her and [...] actually what Dorine is doing is an example and everybody has that desire to do what she is doing.”

– KKD1

One community respondent emphasised that many would want their daughters to be like Dorine, projecting her as a role model in the community:

*“Dorine, she’s a role model, [...] through her, many women in the community nowadays, are encouraging their girl child to go to school and their children to go to school basically because they believe there is an open door [...] for everyone. If Dorine [...] can do this, even their children and through education their children can be able to be like her.” (KKD5)*

Her strength and leadership have contributed to her being viewed as a role model not only by women, but also by men:

*“Dorine now has empowered women; [...] Men also feel like this one is a strong woman in the society, standing firm for women.” (KKD2)*

This community respondent elaborated how Dorine is a role model for him, as he learnt many soft skills from Dorine which were eventually transferred to his workmates:

*“Because she has affected me when I’m with her, the same thing she has taught me. I’ve also taught my cycle to other people in my workplace. In my business. Also, my friends whom I work with the time consciousness she has given me. I project this same time consciousness to other people that are going to follow her, with a team player like the way she is she’s a good team player. She shows this to me, and I go show us to other teams I am in then they go to copy from me. She’s a problem solver and when I see a skill in her or a problem she has solved, and because I’ve seen from her, I’ll go show to other people how things are done [...].” (KKD3)*

### 3.1 Community Empowerment

According to participants, Dorine’s distinctive characteristics and strong community engagement have resulted in her being seen as a role model and a source of empowerment for women in the community (KKD3). One respondent revealed one example of how Dorine empowered a relative to pursue her education:

*“My sister-in-law has learned from her and because she has gone to school, and she knows school is important. she is studying very well, and she is perfecting.” (KKD3)*

Dorine has also empowered professionals in her community, inviting them to commit to the expectations of their job to give back to the community. One interviewee revealed that Dorine significantly empowered him to start giving back to the community whenever he is off duty:



*"With my interaction with Dorine actually, I'm being empowered with my role in that I'm involved in my translation in and out of my profession. When I'm at my job, I'm working and when I'm in the community also, I'm able to give back what I'm doing."(KKD2)*

This encouragement to share knowledge and skills for the community is contagious, spreading among other community professionals and enhancing community resource networks:

*"Other professionals can learn from her, [...] like in my own professional now, as a translator, I'm actually able to, to make people aware that Dorine's exists, some of them like teachers also are able to create awareness to their own learners on the importance of SGBV or the*

*importance of education, also it has triggered them to work better, like Dorine's office." (KKD2)*

In this chain of empowerment, Dorine is able to reach more people in need while also fostering a strong sense of commitment among other professionals to eradicate SGBV.

Participants have expressed that Dorine has empowered everyone in regard to changing the cultural narrative of a male-dominated community, particularly enlightening community leaders regarding female leadership (KKD2). This has encouraged other women to be like her and hold positions of authority in the community (KKD2).



Figure 4: Dorine in a community meeting



Through her actions, Dorine built recognition for women as key stakeholders in community for problem solving and conflict resolution. One community respondent stated that women were previously nowhere to be seen in community leadership and decision-making processes. Dorine helped them find their place in the leadership structure, which resulted in a significant growth of women in leadership roles in the community (KKD3).

Participants also reported that Dorine empowered other women in the community who wanted to initiate community mobilisation projects or activities. This inspiration to community has also been translated in terms of promoting healthy lifestyle, inviting community members to join her to follow a journey of fitness and health:

*“Now women who are there in the community who are reluctant, they wish also to get that initiative to be able to mobilise the community, and be able to take chances and solving cases or some wish the case has to come to them and they solve. And like I said, she does yoga, this [is] one of the big things now, people were not into doing yoga, and through her, some of them are feeling like to network with her so that they can learn also how to do yoga, [...] how they could stay healthy. So, those are some of the things that people see from her because if people want to do those things that were believed that not possible to be done”. (KKD5)*

Thus, Dorine’s engagement has had significant impact on members of her community, promoting the empowerment and wellbeing of all and particularly women, by creating a space for them in the community leadership and daily activities.

## Key points

- The Diploma in Liberal Studies allowed Dorine to nurture essential qualities and skills that transformed her into an agent of change: commitment, humanity and care, courage, passion, leadership, communication, problem solving and critical thinking.
- Thanks to her active involvement in the community, Dorine contributed to the reduction of instances of SGBV, made reporting of SGBV more accessible, created more awareness about gender equality and the rights of all community members, and ultimately contributed to building a safer, more accessible and affordable community.
- Dorine improved the living conditions in her community by setting up a convenience shop so that people can access affordable food items without having to travel long distances.
- Dorine is perceived as a role model and a source of empowerment. She has inspired women and other members of the community, which has resulted in an increase in the number of women in leadership roles.



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