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Sawla Superwoman ●

*My name is Portia
Dumba*

In the remote village of Damangduri in northern Ghana, Portia, a young teacher is rewriting the narrative of education against all odds.

In January 2022, I took up the challenge of teaching at Damangduri DA Junior High School as its sole teacher. It was a daunting task, but I saw it as an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the future leaders of Ghana.

The journey hasn't been easy. My commitment to education stems from personal hardship and resilience. In 2008, when I was just 10 years old, my father passed away in a motorbike accident during a visit to his parents in the north. His loss left a void in our family that was further deepened when my mother fell ill and passed away four years later. My brothers and I were left to navigate life on our own, relying on hope and determination to see us through.

Education became my sanctuary. Despite the challenges, I was fortunate to be selected for the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at CAMFED during senior high school. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program didn't just pay my school fees—it transformed my life. The mentorship component was particularly impactful, introducing me to inspiring individuals who guided me and built my confidence. They showed me that my circumstances didn't have to define my future.





Today, as a teacher, I bring that same mentorship mindset to my classroom. The school has three classrooms and three teachers, serving students aged eight to 15. Younger children often sit in to avoid disrupting others if left outside the classroom. Every day, I face the challenge of limited resources and a diverse range of students, yet I remain committed to creating a nurturing environment for learning.

Ironically, my daily commute to the school is on a motorbike—the very mode of transport that claimed my father's life. For a long time, I avoided motorbikes, but now I've embraced them as a symbol of resilience and necessity. They are my link to the children who depend on me.





My story is not just about overcoming personal loss but also about using that experience to inspire others. I want my students to know that they are capable of greatness, no matter their circumstances. Education is the key, and I am committed to unlocking that door for them.

This journey is not without its challenges, but it is one of purpose and hope. Every lesson I teach is a step toward shaping a brighter future—not just for these children but for Ghana as a whole.

“If I leave and no one replaces me, what happens to them?” This question fuels my commitment and drives me forward each day. I am here to make a difference, one student at a time.



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In a small Ghanaian community, we are partnering with the women in Gindabo to transform their livelihoods and their environment through shea butter production. The women here, through their own organized system, collect and store shea nuts from local women, helping them connect to Pordu Care Touch Life, a social enterprise dedicated to producing shea butter and related products. This initiative not only

creates employment opportunities but also addresses a critical environmental issue: the cutting of shea trees for charcoal. Recognizing the long-term impact of deforestation, Pordu Care Touch Life introduced sustainable alternatives, encouraging women to shift from tree-cutting to shea butter processing. This change has not only increased their income but also sparked a deeper appreciation for the shea industry and its potential.





Pordu Care Touch Life extends its impact beyond shea butter production. With 20 percent of product sales directed toward community support, the enterprise invests in quality education, female leadership, and skills training for women. Through these funds, women are empowered to learn alternative skills such as soap-making and beadwork, providing them with sustainable income options. This holistic approach to women's empowerment and environmental conservation is a testament to the enterprise's vision for a brighter, greener future. By supporting Pordu Care Touch Life, consumers contribute to preserving the environment, uplifting women, and fostering sustainable development in Ghana



When I joined this community in the Sawla-Tuna-Kalba district, I saw an urgent need to guide young minds toward a brighter future, just as I was mentored during senior high school through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program. Many of these children in the community face pressing challenges and lack direction, unable to articulate their dreams or find solutions to their struggles. To address this, I initiated mentorship sessions, offering guidance, support, and even practical help like providing sanitary towels for young girls.

Recently, my work with Sister Keepers has opened new opportunities for my mentees, with three of them being selected for a Black Girls in The Lead (B-GILD) competition in Accra. These remarkable young girls are tackling critical issues like waste management, unhealthy relationships, and teenage pregnancies, working toward real solutions for their community. My vision is to continue inspiring others and attracting like-minded individuals so we can work together to empower these children and create lasting change.



Building a Legacy of Hope and Action

Every challenge is an opportunity to inspire, to grow, and to create change. From empowering women to protect the shea trees that sustain their livelihoods to mentoring young minds to dream boldly, my journey has shown me the power of giving back. Each step we take—whether it's planting a tree, guiding a child, or equipping a woman with skills—creates ripples of transformation. Together, we can build a future where communities thrive, nature is preserved, and everyone has the chance to rise above their circumstances. The work may be tough, but the impact is immeasurable. Let us inspire action and leave a legacy of hope for generations to come.







Kenyan Conservation Queen ●

*My name is Patita
Nkamunu*

I grew up in a home where love and protection were at the centre of everything. My parents, especially my father, instilled in me a deep sense of community, justice, and the importance of standing up for what's right. He was my first teacher, guiding me through lessons of social justice, politics, and compassion. He taught me that true change comes from working for the benefit of others, not just oneself. My father's unwavering commitment to love and equity continues to inspire me every day, and I carry his lessons with me in both my personal and professional life.

As a child, I was fortunate to be surrounded by a close-knit family and a deep connection to nature. These early experiences shaped the direction of my career, where I sought to find ways to use my skills to empower communities while protecting the environment. My journey took a pivotal turn when I was selected for the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at the University of Cambridge, where I was accepted into a Master's degree program. This experience was life-changing, not just for my education but for my growth as a leader in the fields of climate technology and nature-based investments.

Today, I am proud to co-founder of EarthAcre, a climate startup that harnesses indigenous knowledge and technology to develop nature assets that benefit local communities. As Head of Projects, I lead initiatives that bridge the gap between traditional wisdom and modern solutions, creating sustainable opportunities for communities while ensuring the protection of our natural resources. Through EarthAcre, I am able to live out my passion for supporting both people and the planet, bringing about real, lasting change for generations to come.



As a mother, one of the greatest challenges I faced while pursuing my studies was balancing my responsibilities at home with my educational goals. However, thanks to the incredible support I received from the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, I was able to focus entirely on my studies for one year without worrying about my children's daily needs. For the first time, I didn't have to stress about what they would eat or how I would provide for them—only when they would eat.

This peace of mind was invaluable, allowing me to immerse myself in my academic work without the constant weight of financial worry. It was a gift that not only empowered me to achieve my personal goals but also gave my children a stable environment where they could thrive while I pursued my dreams.





My mother and brother have always been my pillars of strength, offering unwavering love and support throughout my life. My mother, despite the many hardships she faced, was the one who held our family together after my father's passing, ensuring that we were cared for and loved. Her strength and determination have always inspired me. When I became a mother myself, I looked to her example of resilience and unconditional love.

My brother, too, has been a constant source of encouragement, always there to support me in every step I took. Their belief in me, even when I doubted myself, has been the fuel that kept me going through the toughest times. I am forever grateful for them, for their sacrifices, and for the love that continues to shape who I am today.





Meeting Mr. Joseph Olesimel, a renowned Maasai land rights activist, was a pivotal moment in my life. His passion for land activism inspired me to take up the cause and become a land rights advocate myself, which I have done for over 15 years.

Through his mentorship, I learned the importance of protecting the land and advocating for those who steward it. In the community, we have come together to support one another in ways I never imagined. By integrating sustainable practices and advocating for the preservation of nature, we are empowering local people to see the value in what they have and protect it for future generations.

Working alongside Mr. Joseph and the community has been a transformative experience—one that has given me purpose and driven me to champion nature-based solutions and land stewardship.



Raj, my co-founder and the CEO of EarthAcre, is an incredible partner in this journey. Together, we've built a company that harnesses indigenous knowledge and innovative technology to create nature assets that benefit local communities. At EarthAcre, we're driven by the belief that protecting the environment and supporting the people who nurture it can go hand in hand. Our work has been a collaboration of diverse minds, and Raj's vision and leadership have been instrumental in guiding us forward.

Through EarthAcre, we've been able to onboard communities, ensuring that the revenue generated from nature-based investments flows directly to the people, creating sustainable income and fostering a deep sense of ownership. It's a powerful reminder of how collaboration and purpose-driven work can change lives and protect the planet.





A Journey of Impact: Transforming Lives, Nurturing the Earth

Looking back on this journey, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunities and the people who have shaped my path. From the guidance of my father to the mentorship that empowered me to dream bigger, and the collaboration with incredible individuals and teams, I've come to realize that change starts with a single step, a single decision to make a difference. Every project we take on, every community we uplift, brings us closer to a world where nature, people, and progress coexist harmoniously. I am committed to continuing this work, driven by the knowledge that together, we can inspire change, foster sustainability, and create lasting impact for generations to come.





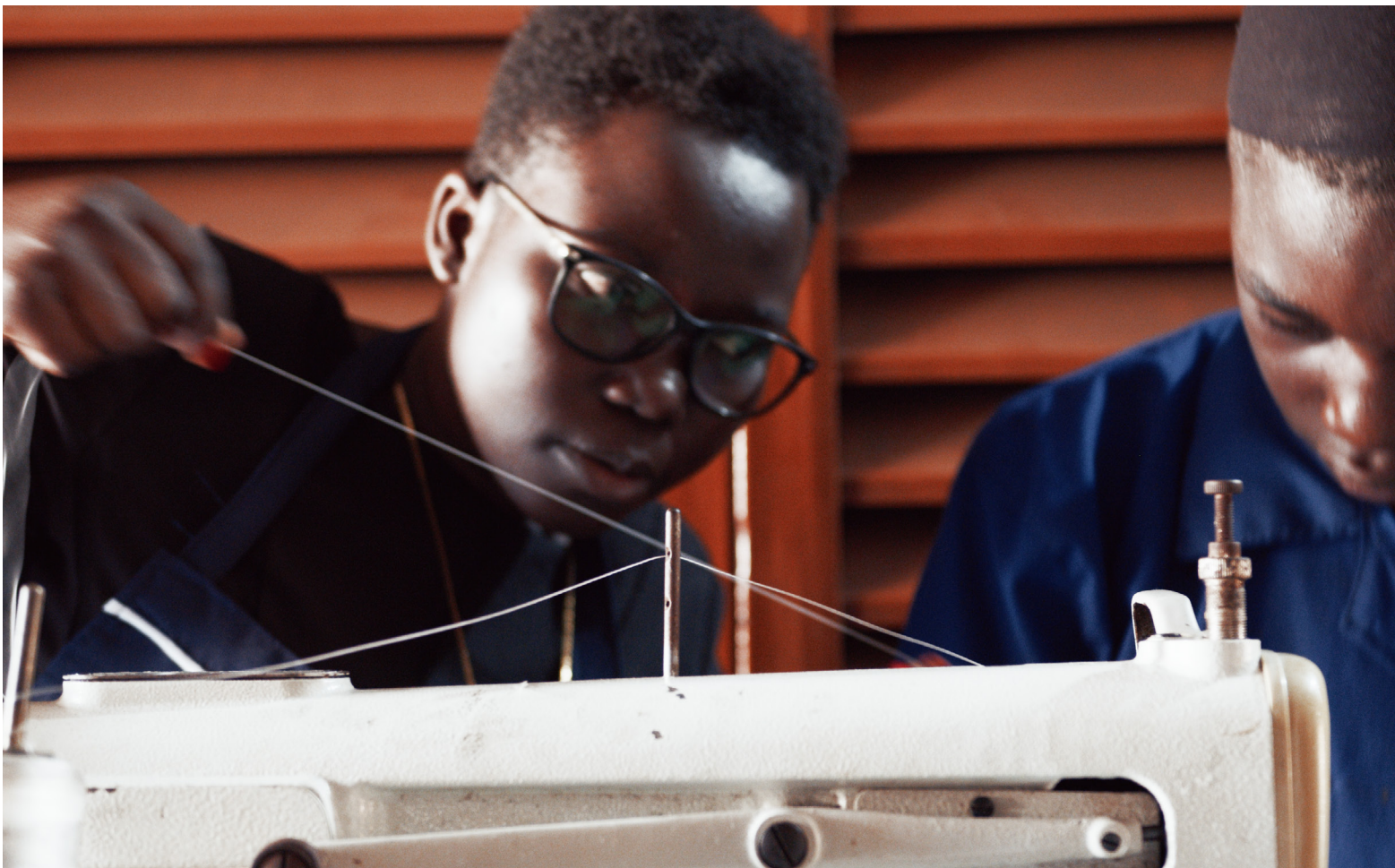
Shoemaker from Soroti ●

My name is Esther Lucy

Growing up in the rural Teso sub-region in Ngara district, Uganda, I was raised in a close-knit community where the well-being of one person was the responsibility of the entire group. My family played a central role in shaping who I am today. We lived in a modest home where I grew up with my three sisters and three brothers, surrounded by the love and support of my parents. My father, in particular, was a huge influence on my life—his wisdom, strength, and love taught me the values I carry with me. One of my proudest accomplishments to date is being able to build a house for my parents, providing them with a comfortable and secure place to spend their golden years. This act is a testament to the love and gratitude I have for them, for the sacrifices they made for us.

From a young age, education was a cornerstone in our family. After completing primary school, I joined Soroti Secondary School, where I excelled and was awarded a scholarship to attend Cornerstone Leadership Academy. My journey continued with a scholarship to Makerere University through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, where I pursued a degree in Community Psychology.

Throughout this time, I was supported by my family and had the privilege of benefiting from a COVID-19 recovery fund, which allowed my family to endure that difficult period. With this support, I graduated, and it was during this time that I discovered my passion for business and empowerment. Inspired by the struggles faced by people with disabilities in my community, I founded Craftwear City Uganda, a social enterprise that provides vocational training in shoemaking to people with disabilities. Through this initiative, I've been able to offer a sustainable income stream for those who were often overlooked by society. Today, I continue to learn, grow, and dream bigger, always seeking to create opportunities for others, just as I've been fortunate to receive.



The journey of Craftwear City Uganda has been nothing short of transformative. It all started with a simple yet powerful idea: to empower people with disabilities by teaching them shoe-making skills and offering them an alternative source of income. Inspired by my neighbor, Mr. Opiyo, who faced discrimination due to his disability but never let that define him, I knew there was a way to create opportunities for others like him.





What began with training just a few individuals has now expanded to over 500 students, with more than 800 pairs of shoes sold across the country. Although we've made great strides, there's still so much more to do. I'm driven by the belief that through skill-building and equal opportunities, we can break barriers and create a more inclusive society, one pair of shoes at a time.





My mentor, Madame Aggie, has been a guiding light throughout my journey, and I cannot express how deeply grateful I am for her influence on my life. She not only taught me the craft of shoemaking but also instilled in me an entrepreneurial spirit that has fueled my determination to succeed. Her resilience, courage, and ability to persevere in business—despite all odds—has been truly inspiring. Through her mentorship, I've learned the importance of embracing challenges, staying focused on my goals, and empowering others along the way. It is because of her unwavering support and wisdom that I've been able to navigate my path with confidence, and I hope to continue passing on the lessons she taught me to those I mentor.



Home and family have always been the heart of everything I do. Growing up in a close-knit family, where we shared everything—joys, struggles, and triumphs—has shaped who I am today. My parents, particularly my mother, taught me the value of hard work and resilience. They instilled in me the belief that family is not just about blood, but about supporting one another through thick and thin. As I continue to build my own path, my family remains my foundation, always cheering me on, and reminding me of the importance of gratitude, kindness, and giving back to those who have shaped my journey.

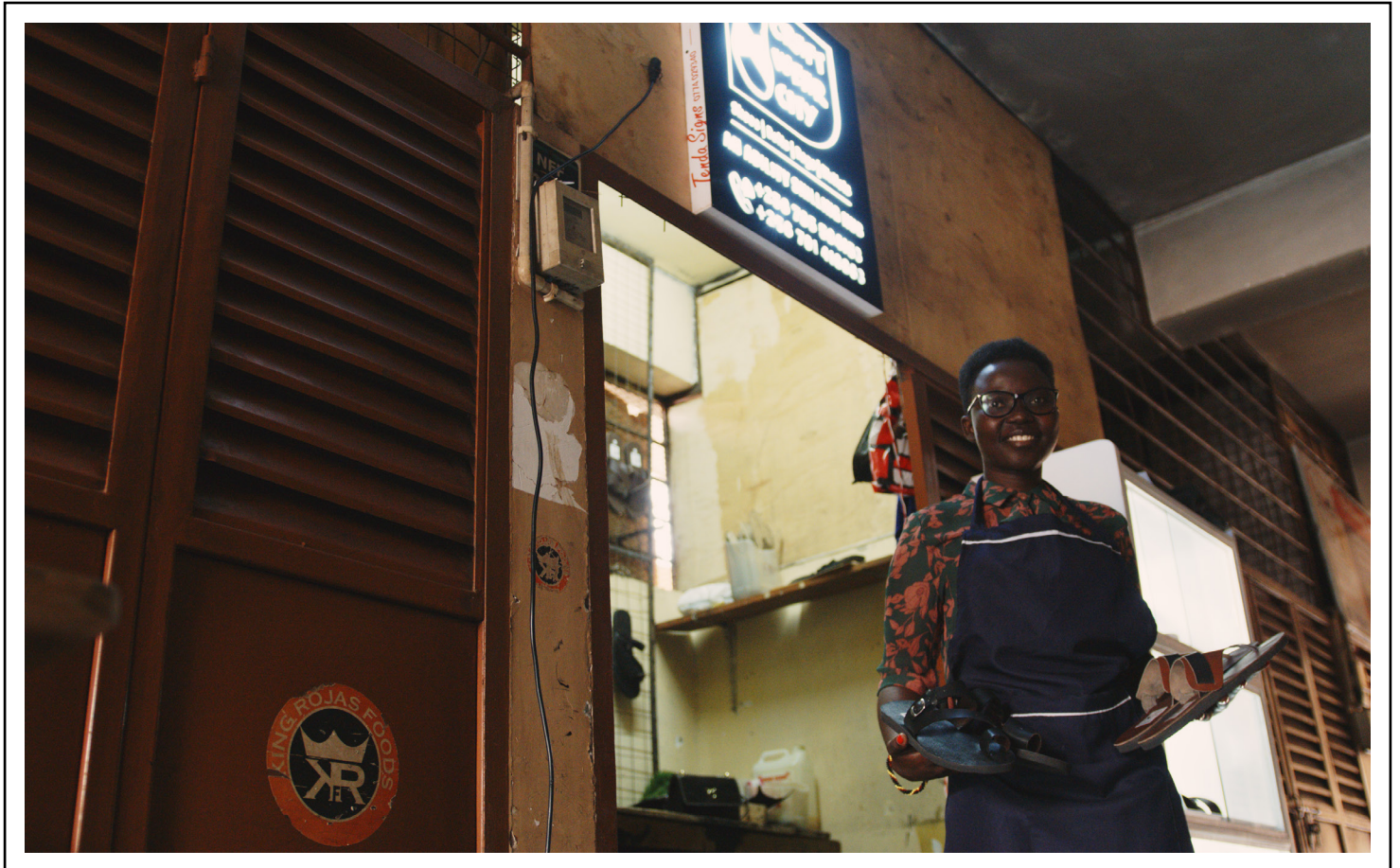




Mr. Opiyo's resilience in the face of adversity inspired me to create Craftwear City Uganda, where I could empower people with disabilities to learn valuable skills and earn a living.



My mother has always been a hardworking entrepreneur, running her shop with dedication, and I believe it's from her that I inherited my own drive for business and success.



Forging a Path of Impact and Inclusion

Reflecting on my journey from a rural childhood to becoming a successful entrepreneur, I'm incredibly grateful for the support of my family, mentors, and the opportunities that have come my way. Each step, whether it was earning a first-class degree, learning the art of shoemaking, or founding Craftwear City Uganda, has been driven by a deep desire to create change for myself and others. I've seen firsthand the power of skill development and inclusivity, and I'm committed to expanding opportunities for people with disabilities, helping them unlock their potential. The future is bright, and I believe that with resilience and vision, we can continue to build a world where everyone has a chance to thrive.





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