



IMPACT STORY



APOTON CLAUDINE



**“SCE taught us how to work together”
Farmers in Diakele village.**



Photo credits : UN Women Cameroon

Claudine APOTON striving in modern agriculture in East region.

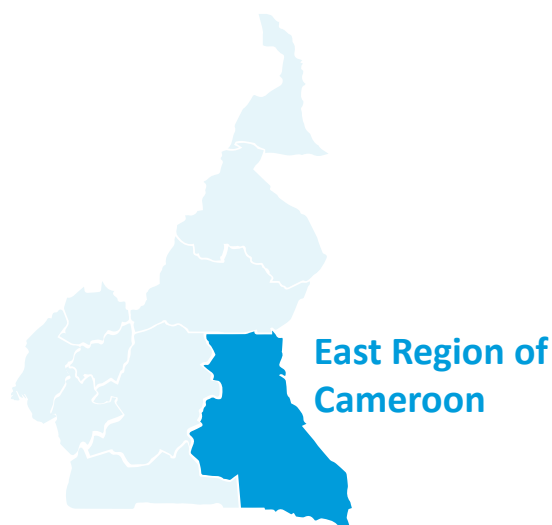
Apoton Claudine, 35, is a single parent with five children who now lives in the East region of Cameroon hosting over 30,000 refugees from the Central African Republic. She stopped going to school in Primary 6 because her parents couldn't afford her school fees. Due to the lack of finances, only one child out of the five in the family could go to school. While growing up, like many children,

Claudine had dreamed of being a nurse, but this dream couldn't materialize since she dropped out of school and was forced into marriage at the age of 14. She embraced farming and wanted to make it her profession.

“Things became so tough for me when my husband passed on through a motor bike accident. I had to do the clearing, tilling, planting, and harvesting alone. My parents couldn't assist since they focused on their farming to make ends meet. I didn't have enough working tools and was making no profit from the sales of my produce.”

She later met the SCE programme team who were on a sensitization campaign in her village. *“I was identified and registered for the free training in agriculture. In the training I learned some farming techniques which became very helpful to me in my activity of farming. After the training, we (the participants) were given farming tools which helped us to improve our farming style.”* Claudine and five other women decided to come together and create a group as they were encouraged to do during the training. She and her fellow group members are happy to collectively work as one. *“This is something we had never done before. With this method of working as a group, we could work on a larger landscape. We engaged in mixed farming, cultivating maize and cassava. Our planting method changed from haphazard planting to planting in rows which yielded more and became more profitable.”* The training received by Claudine and her group in agriculture has been a game changer. They confirm that their yields, income and living conditions have greatly improved. For the first harvest, we successfully harvested 10 bags of maize. Sales are done based on the seasons.

In periods of scarcity, a bag is sold for about 20,000frs CFA [about 40 USD], and in periods of plenty, it is sold for 15,000frs CFA [about 30 USD]. This has changed my life as I can now provide for my family and send my children to school,” Claudine said. Claudine, like her counterparts who benefited from the training, is today advocating for rural women farmers to work together for better yields and results. *“I call on other women to get trained and work in groups because group work is more profitable than working alone.”*



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 SCE journey. This scaffolded global approach has led to high retention and low dropout rates.



Claudine and her farming group cultivate Cassava