

IMPACT STORY



AZAH YOLAND



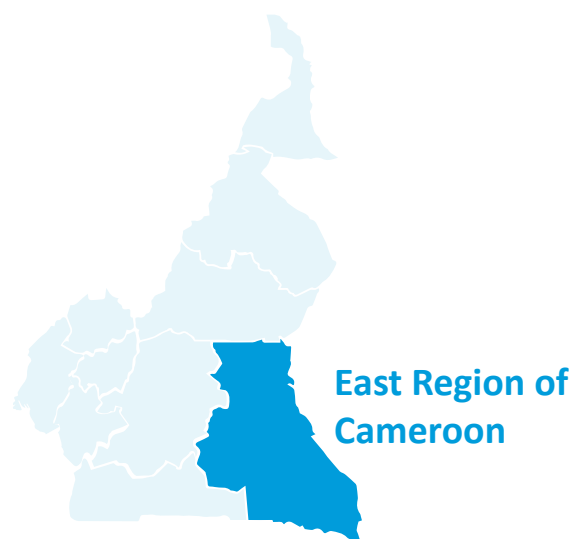
“Do not minimize little beginnings” Azah Yoland, IDP from the Northwest becomes celebrated fashion designer in the East region of Cameroon.

Azah Yoland, IDP becomes celebrated fashion designer in East region

Internally displaced Azah Yoland Achoasah, 28 and a single mother of three children, is from Bamenda in the Northwest region. She is among the over one million persons from the Northwest region forced to move to the East region due to the Anglophone crisis which started in 2016.

She found herself in a devastating situation and could not complete her secondary education. She separated from the father of her children and ran to the East region for refuge where she settled with her three children. Life became tougher for her there by the day as she couldn't provide for herself and her family. One day, while on a walk, she met the SCE programme staff who were on a sensitization campaign. This encounter, she says, changed her life. It gave her another chance.

"They informed me about the SCE programme and the training programme they were organizing at the Women's Empowerment Centre. I immediately got interested and later on went to the centre for registration. I decided to go in for tailoring since I admired those involved therein, and also because I liked designing, I liked to dress well and help people dress and look good," Azah Yoland explained. "I learned how to cut, sew, and design dresses. After the training, I was handed a brand-new sewing machine which I now use to sew dresses for customers, myself and my family. I now make enough income from this activity to enable me to assist my parents in paying school fees for my siblings and my children. I am respected by my family and the community." While appreciating UN Women for the initiative, Azah Yoland also encourages other women not to give up in their endeavours. "In a community like this one where so many people are involved in tailoring, the excellent skills I acquired make me stand out as a celebrated fashion designer. I encourage all young ladies and women not to give up. Keep pushing hard. One day you will make it to the top. Do not minimize little beginnings."



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.