



Windle International Kenya

Tailored for success: Talented DAFI scholar designing his own dream.



Name:

John Mach Garang Mach

Alias:

PLO

Nationality:

South Sudan

**Sponsorship Level /
Field of Study**

Bachelor of Arts Degree
in International studies
majoring in Security
studies

Surrounded by mushrooming student hostels in Juja Town is a small living apartment from where sounds of a whirring needle of an electric sewing machine are heard.

John Mach Garang Mach fondly known as PLO is expertly maneuvering a fabric under the machine. Displayed on the wall are eye-catching designs and outfits, a clear evidence of the fabric transformation about to take place.



PLO tailors a fabric on his sewing machine at his student hostel room.



Work in progress: Client outfits on display

He pauses and looks up as his face lights up with a broad welcoming smile. The humble abode is both his tailoring workshop and residence that he also shares with other student friends.

Early life as a refugee in Kenya

PLO's story begins in 2004 when he first arrived in Kakuma Refugee Camp from South Sudan alongside a few of his family members. This is where he would later start his lower primary education before moving to Eldoret for his Upper Primary and Secondary Education.

He recalls taking interest in tailoring and design in his early years.

"From an early age as a school going child, I always wanted to stand out in the way I was dressed. I would be very particular, for instance, on how I wanted my uniform tailored. Getting an education was important to me as well as also being able to express myself through my dressing."

Getting Tertiary Education Scholarship

The finalist student at the University of Nairobi is soon to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in International studies, majoring in Security studies.

He remembers vividly the time he applied for the DAFI scholarship back in 2018.

"I knew I wanted to further my education and with a B plain in KCSE Exams of 2017, I decided to apply for the DAFI scholarship. I was lucky to be among those selected for award of the scholarship in 2018, more so being the first attempt."

Windle International Kenya (WIK) is the implementing partner of United Nations High Commissioner of Refugee (UNHCR) in the DAFI program in Kenya.

In 2018, WIK awarded a total of 110 Scholarships targeting camp based refugees from Dadaab and Kakuma Refugee Camps and refugees from urban centres.

Mr Kasaya, the senior education counsellor at WIK adds, "To date, a total of 1,185 young refugees have benefitted from the programme, giving an opportunity to the young refugee scholars to major in fields ranging from medicine to business administration, social and behavioral sciences, mathematics and computer sciences, among other subjects. This in itself is a contribution to skills development, empowerment and academic achievement as part of a broader UNHCR strategy of promoting self-reliance and durable solutions for refugees."



PLO speaking at the WIK Finalist Students dinner held in July 2022.

Opportunity for skills development and talent nurturing

For PLO, the DAFI scholarship was also an opportunity to network and further nurture his talent and skills.

“Pursuing a bachelor’s degree and still being able to grow my talent in tailoring, fashion and design is fulfilling. Not forgetting the friendships and support system you create which for me has been very instrumental. I have the honor of dressing fellow DAFI scholars and university friends with our unique designs who in turn make referrals.”

It has however not been an easy journey for PLO who had to make savings from his allowances to buy a second hand electric sewing machine.

“Getting capital is a challenge. Luckily, I got a partner in a friend that supports my passion and dreams in tailoring and design and we put resources together to buy a sewing machine to start with.”

Future Plans

He believes there is no limit to what one can achieve and looks forward to another exciting chapter after graduating in December.

“I believe the skills I’ve acquired in International security will be vital in that I’ll be a consultant in matters security and strategies back in South Sudan. Additionally, I look forward to growing the tailoring business and hopefully create employment for other young people.”



He further reveals an interesting perspective to the PLO nick name.

"I am an admirer of PLO Lumumba, a top eloquent Kenyan lawyer. One of my regrets is missing admission for a Law degree and I look forward to one day enrolling in Law School. I adopted the name PLO to keep the dream alive."

To incoming DAFI scholars, PLO has a word of advice,

"Learn to live well with people and do not forget where you come from"

Above: PLO modelling some of his designs.



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