



**Making a difference through
community service**

Teacher Benedict: Outgoing WIK DAFI scholar bringing hope and transformation into the lives of urban refugees and needy Kenyan students.



**Benedict
Marial
Bath**

Nationality
S. Sudanese

**Outgoing WIK
DAFI scholar**

**Biology &
Chemistry
Teacher**

Finalist student

**Project Planning
and Management**

*University of
Nairobi*



Benedict in his office at Sud Academy

Tucked at the bottom of a hilly slope in Kawangware, a low income residential area in the outskirts of Nairobi, is Sud Academy, a community school serving children from underprivileged families.

A swamp straddles nearby with a block of classrooms made from corrugated iron sheets visible as we approach the school gate.

We are met by Benedict Marial Bath, the school principal and a WIK DAFI scholar as he ushers us to his office.

“Welcome to Sud Academy,” he beams, looking well-groomed in a checked shirt and a black suit.



A view of Sud Academy from the main road.

A place of Hope and Belonging

As Benedict begins to talk about how and why Sud Academy exists, he explains that the academy was started in 2002 by the South Sudanese refugee community in Nairobi who after fleeing their war torn country, were desperate for better lives and education opportunities for their refugee youth.

Looking back, he was faced with the same plight as a young South Sudanese refugee in Kenya with the zeal to get an education and better his life chances.



The Principal's Office is seen, tucked in a row of other corrugated iron structures within the school compound.



Sud Academy school gate.

Escaping war

Born in Tonj County, South Sudan, between 1995 and 1996, Benedict was around nine years old when he was forced to flee his home. He still remembers the pain of being separated from his parents and siblings and the many fears that were an everyday part of his childhood.

“We watched as our livestock were stolen, our villages and homes being burnt to the ground and witnessed family, relatives and neighbors being killed by government militiamen.”

Like millions of other South Sudanese, the civil war in South Sudan would force Benedict from his home in search of refuge in neighboring countries.

“I left my family behind, embarking on a long and treacherous journey on snake infested routes without food and water to Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Uganda”

Even at a young age, Benedict knew that he wanted to get an education, something that war had deprived them.

“Upon arriving at Nakivale Refugee Settlement in 2006, I immediately joined Class 1, marking the start of my formal education. All I wanted was an opportunity to go to school.”

Blessing in Disguise

For the next few years, Benedict would become a star student at the school before developing health complications that saw him get transferred to Nairobi for specialized medical care.

Unknowingly to him, this would set off a chain of events that would open education doors that he could only dream of.

“While in Nairobi for treatment, I was informed of a missionary group that was conducting interviews to support refugees in education. I immediately applied and was taken under the Orthodox Church Sponsorship to complete my upper primary in Nairobi.”

This was a confirmation to Benedict that the hard work he had put to excel in his education was not in vain. He was now more than determined to pursue his education, which he saw as the only opportunity to improve his circumstances.

It was not long before luck smiled at him yet again.

“In my final Primary school year, I got a good Samaritan to sponsor me in a top private primary school in Nairobi, seeing my impressive academic performance. They were confident of my potential to achieve more if given an opportunity to study in a school with better facilities”

Indeed, Benedict did not disappoint, scoring an impressive 390 marks out of the possible 500 in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) of 2012. This would earn him a spot at Thika High



Students in class at Sud Academy.

School, a top extra County School in Kiambu County for his Secondary Education which he would later complete thanks to support from well-wishers.

"It was a miracle completing my Secondary Education. The well-wisher that had previously supported me pulled out as I was about to join Form 2.I pleaded my case with the school administration who restored my hope by supporting me all through to Form 4.I would later sit my Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) exams in 2016, scoring grade B Plain."It was painful missing a B+ with just one point." He adds.

Of being a DAFI scholar and making an impact in the community

Often, tertiary education opportunities for refugees are limited and competitive. Despite this, Benedict was determined more than ever to keep the dream of advancing his education alive.

"I knew I was qualified for refugee tertiary education scholarships yet I was not guaranteed to get the opportunity because there were many others like me, qualified and ready to compete for the same opportunities."

This however did not deter him from actively seeking for the scholarships and in 2017, he made his first attempt in applying for the WIK DAFI scholarship which was unsuccessful. During this time, he had started to volunteer as a teacher at Sud Academy.

"I am passionate about giving back to the community. I was therefore drawn to Sud Academy because I have a similar traumatic background as the students, yet I felt was in a position to serve as a role model and inspire them as a Biology and Chemistry teacher."

2019 was his 3rd attempt applying for the DAFI scholarship which was a success. He would be supported for a degree programme in Project Planning and Management at the University of Nairobi (UoN) starting September 2019.

“This was a dream come true. I felt happy at that point in my life doing two things that meant so much to me: being a tertiary education scholar and bringing hope and transformation into the lives of refugee students as a teacher. I am grateful to WIK for allowing me to take evening classes making it possible to continue with my noble work at Sud Academy.”

Forging ahead

Today, Benedict is a finalist student at UoN hoping to graduate soon with honors. In May 2022, he was promoted to the position of school Principal at Sud Academy.

“At Sud Academy, we are empowering a generation of future leaders together with my team of teachers. We are educating around 200 students drawn from both the refugee community, majorly South Sudanese, and disadvantaged Kenyan students from the surrounding slum areas. We have upper Primary from Class Six to Eight and Secondary Level from Form 1 to Form 4.”



Benedict interacts with students in a classroom.



He talks about the big responsibilities and challenges that come with the role.

“It has not been an easy task being a student and a school head as the same time. At the school, teachers and students look up to me to steer them in the right direction despite the glaring challenge of inadequate resources and facilities. As a DAFI scholar I am also expected to achieve satisfactory academic performance and participate in scholarship related activities .Juggling the two is only possible with discipline, focus, resilience and hard work.”

Alumni Success Stories

He further talks about what inspires him.

“DAFI scholars make a commitment to serve the community. This, together with my personal resolve to bring positive change to the lives of the less fortunate is what keeps me going. I am also encouraged by the fact that other people made sacrifices for me to get here and therefore feel obliged to do the same for others.”

Benedict sees far and beyond dreams of going back to serve in his country.

“I believe this is preparing me for a bigger assignment and a bigger impact as i have plans of establishing my own projects in South Sudan that will help address some of the current issues.”

As our conversation draws to a close, the school bell rings and it is time for a mid-lesson short break. Students dash in and out of the classrooms and mingle in the narrow courtyard as Benedict proudly looks on.

“My hope is that many more South Sudanese refugees are educated and return to our home country with education and skills that will aid in the process of rebuilding a better country.”



No.10 Amboseli Road, Off Gitanga Road, Lavington
P.O. Box 40521-00100 Nairobi
Mobile +254 721 551 451, Email: windle@windle.org
Website: www.windle.org