



Biannual Report

January - June 2026

From Surviving to Thriving



Six months ago, if you had told Nyalual she'd be earning her own income, mentoring other young women, and dreaming of building a school one day, she might not have believed you. Today, her story sits at the heart of this report not because it is unusual, but because it is becoming ordinary. That is the change we are building at SIR.

This has been a season of quiet, steady progress. 516 young people walked through our digital skills programs. 60 women stepped into entrepreneurship and financial literacy training, many for the first time in their lives holding capital that was truly theirs. 47 refugee-led and community-based organisations grew stronger under our support, because we know that lasting change is never one organisation's work alone.

We also stepped further into the rooms where policy is written. Our team sat on regional panels, advised a foreign ministry shaping its next development policy, co-authored a national framework for refugee work authorisation, and published our case for funding refugee-led organisations as the institutions they are not just as implementers. None of this happened by accident, and none of it happened without cost. It happened because refugee youth chose to show up, learn, and lead and because our partners chose to trust a refugee-led organisation to do this work.

I don't take that trust lightly. It's why we closed this period with a financial surplus margin above 11%, not because growth was the goal, but because sustainability is how we keep our promises. It's also why Huru Garden, our family recreation centre, mattered so much this period when a funding crisis threatened jobs and programmes.

We are not done. There are more women waiting for their first paycheck, more children who need a safe place to learn and play, more policy tables where refugee voices still need to be in the room. But if this report tells you anything, it's that the model works: when refugees are given real tools and real trust, they don't just survive they build.

Thank you for standing with us in solidarity.

In solidarity,

Bahana Mirindi Hydrogene
Executive Director, Solidarity Initiative for Refugees

Who We Are

Solidarity Initiative for Refugees (SIR) is a refugee-led, community-based organization founded and managed by refugee youth and legally registered in Kenya. Based in Kakuma Municipality, SIR works alongside refugee and host communities to create sustainable pathways toward self-reliance through education, economic empowerment, capacity strengthening, and advocacy.

Our programs focus on expanding access to quality education, promoting positive parenting and early childhood development, advancing youth employability and digital livelihoods, strengthening women's economic empowerment, and supporting refugee inclusion through policy advocacy and institutional capacity development.



Mission

To empower refugee youth, women, and children through education, digital livelihoods, entrepreneurship, and advocacy, enabling them to transition from survival to self-reliance and become active agents of change within their communities.



Vision

A world where refugees are fully included and empowered to learn, earn, and lead with dignity.

Who We Serve



Refugee & host community youth
with a particular focus on adolescent girls and young women



Women-led households
caregivers, and aspiring entrepreneurs



Children aged 0–6
through early childhood development and positive parenting



RLOs & CBOs
through institutional strengthening, governance and capacity support



Our Core Values



Accountability

We uphold transparency and responsibility in everything we do.



Integrity

We act ethically and honestly while earning the trust of the communities we serve.



Responsibility

We are committed to delivering meaningful and sustainable impact.



Commitment

We remain dedicated to improving the lives of refugees and host communities.



Quality Service

We strive for excellence through innovative, evidence-based, community-driven programming.



Equity

We promote fairness, inclusion, and equal opportunities for all.



Innovation

We embrace creativity and adaptive solutions to address complex humanitarian and development challenges.



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Our Impact Areas

516

Refugee & Host Community youth trained in **Digital Skills**



- 20 Trained in Software Engineering
- 22 women -only cohort enrolled in **Graphic Design** 11 Completed
- 114 women -only cohort enrolled in **Digital Marketing** 69 Completed
- 360 enrolled in **2D Animation** 260 Completed

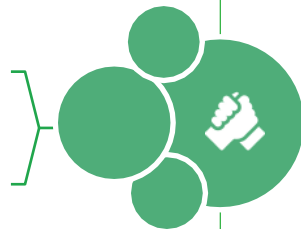
60

Women trained in **Entrepreneurship & financial literacy**



- 20 Beneficiaries Received Start-up Capital
- KES 600,000 start-up capital disbursed
- 2 VSLA / Digital Chama Groups formed

- 128 Individual trained on RLOs & CBOs Registration process, Governance and RM
- 68 Individual supported through our Documentation Support Desk
- 5 Policy Influencing Engagements — regional, national & county level
- 1 International Op-Ed Published
- 1 Refugee Documentation Support Desk (RDSD) Launched



47

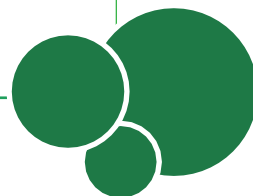
RLOs/CBOs supported with Formal Registration

- 108 Caregivers in PSGs
- 98 Linked to Savings Groups
- 20 Received Childcare Support
- 6 Parental Support Group (PSGs) Active
- Total number of children reached 164



- 72 reached through Play-Based Learning & Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)
- 26 children Supported through Creche
- 3 Community Facilitators Trained (SEL / MHPSS)

- 2 New Partnerships Secured
- 3 Policies Developed or Updated.
- 1 Borehole under construction at SIR Digital Hub .



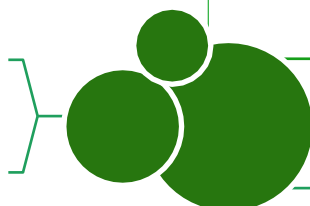
Institutional Strengthening

Opengates Freelancing Marketplace



- [Opengates platform](#) just launched, and onboarding is ongoing with 353 Registered Talents.

- KES 10M+ invested since 2024 — 70% through Danida SMP/DRC
- KES 1.4M+ income generated and fully reinvested
- 4 of 5 business units operational
- KES 10M/year projected income at full operation by Dec 2027



Social Enterprises - Huru Garden Family Recreation Centre

This reporting period

- KES 592,860 Revenue



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Bringing Refugee Voices to the Table

1. Policy Enabling Environment for Refugee Self-Reliance Roundtable

On March 30–31, SIR's Executive Director joined a panel on Local Integration and Social Cohesion at the Policy Enabling Environment for Refugee Self-Reliance (PEERS) Roundtable in Nairobi. Convened by the Migration Policy Institute in partnership with the East African Centre for Forced Migration and Displacement and the Center on Forced Displacement at Boston University, the roundtable brought together government officials, refugee leaders, and development partners from across East Africa to shape policy on refugee self-reliance and inclusion. SIR's participation ensured that lessons from Kakuma directly informed a conversation shaping refugee policy across the region.

2. At the Table with Norway's Ministry of Development

On May 21 and 28, SIR was one of nine local and refugee-led organisations from East, Southern, and Horn of Africa invited to advise Norway's State Secretary for Development, Stine Renate Håheim, as part of "The Turning Point" — a national policy process that will shape a white paper presented to the Norwegian Parliament in its spring 2027 session. Convened by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), the dialogue pushed for genuine localisation: flexible multi-year funding, streamlined due diligence, and a shift from treating local actors as implementers to recognising them as decision-makers. SIR's presence in the room meant Kakuma's realities directly shaped a conversation with the power to influence how one of the world's most principled humanitarian donors funds the sector going forward.

3. MRP in Education - Bringing RLOs to the Table with Government

In May, SIR convened 32 leaders from 16 refugee-led and community-based organisations delivering early childhood, accelerated learning, social-emotional learning, and life-skills programming across Kakuma Municipality for a two-day workshop with the Sub-County Directorate of Education, Turkana West. Led by the Sub-County Director of ECDE, the Quality Assurance and Standards Officer, and the Public Health Officer, sessions walked participants through Kenya's

education policy framework, ECDE registration requirements, governance through Boards of Management, and public health and quality standards. As humanitarian funding contracts and responsibility shifts to government under the Shirika Plan, alignment between refugee-led organisations and county priorities is no longer optional, it is the precondition for sustaining education for the children SIR and its partners serve. Every one of the 16 organisations left with an action plan, and SIR will continue to walk with them as they implement it. The workshop was made possible with the support of Cohere, Porticus, and the Sub-County Directorate of Education.

4. Kenya Coalition for Refugee Economic Inclusion White Paper

In March, SIR joined the Kenya Coalition for Refugee Economic Inclusion — now 32 organisations strong to co-author and release a white paper, "Unlocking Refugee Work Authorisation in Kenya: A Practical Framework for Economic Inclusion, Institutional Alignment, and National Growth." The paper sets out concrete proposals to simplify work authorisation for refugees, connect skilled refugee talent to Kenya's growing sectors, and expand jobs, tax revenue, and social inclusion including a proposed pilot programme to demonstrate that refugee economic inclusion benefits employers, host communities, and the national economy alike.

5. Strengthening Systems for Life Skills and Social-Emotional Learning

SIR joined the 2026 Annual Learning and Reflection Convening, themed "Building Stronger Systems: Collaboration, Leadership, and Collective Action for Life Skills and Values/Social-Emotional Learning in Kenya's ASAL and Refugee Settings," held in Nanyuki from April 26–29. The convening brought together state and non-state stakeholders to strengthen multi-level leadership, improve system coherence, and generate actionable commitments to advance learning outcomes for children in arid, semi-arid, and displacement-affected settings.

6. Naming the Contradiction: An Op-Ed for The New Humanitarian

In April, SIR's Executive Director published an opinion piece in The New Humanitarian, "The humanitarian system celebrates refugee-led organisations, then starves them." The piece challenges the sector to move beyond praise for refugee-led organisations and back it with multi-year, unrestricted funding — closing the salary gap between international and refugee-led organisations and recognising RLOs as institutions, not short-term implementers. Its central argument: if proximity to community is the value the humanitarian sector claims to sell, the organisations closest to communities deserve to be funded as the institutions they are.

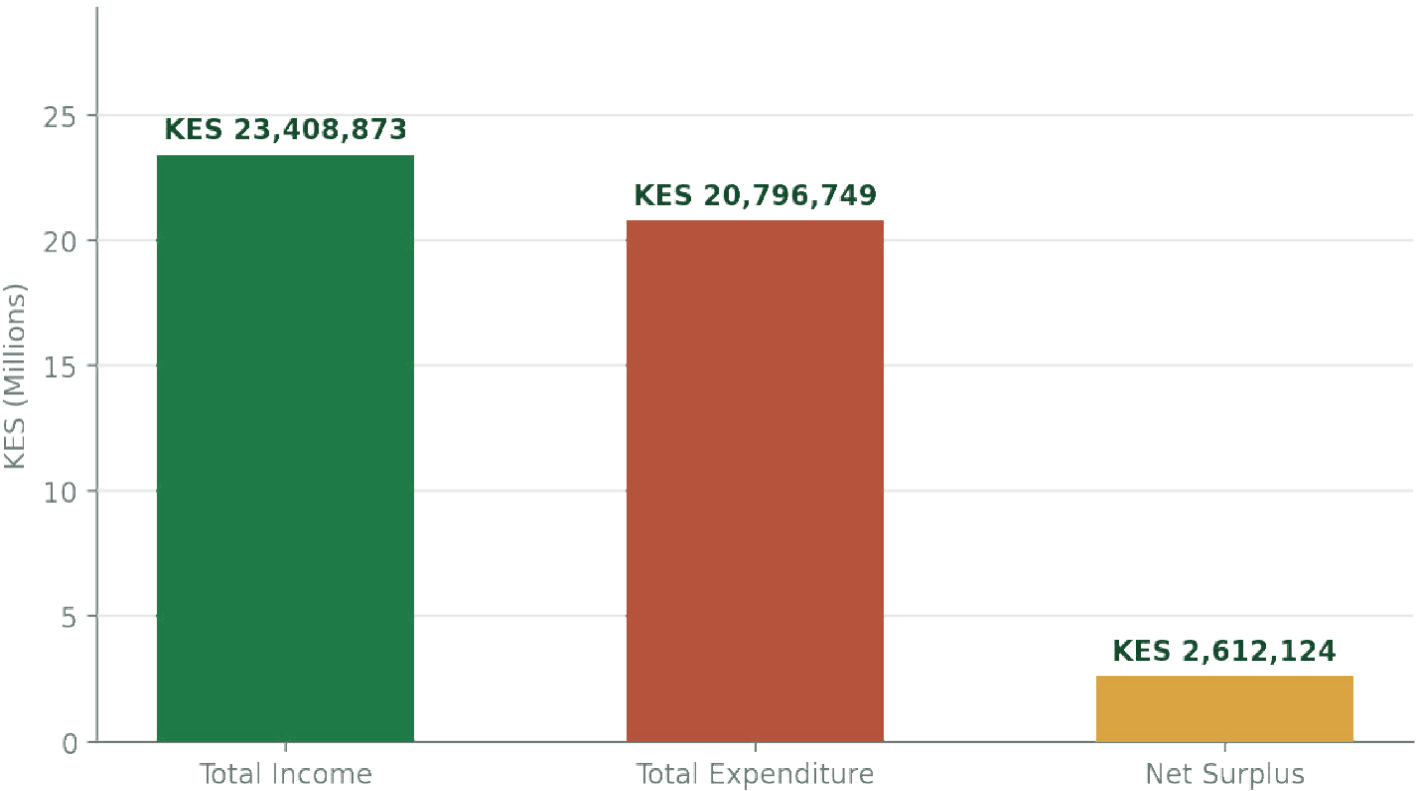
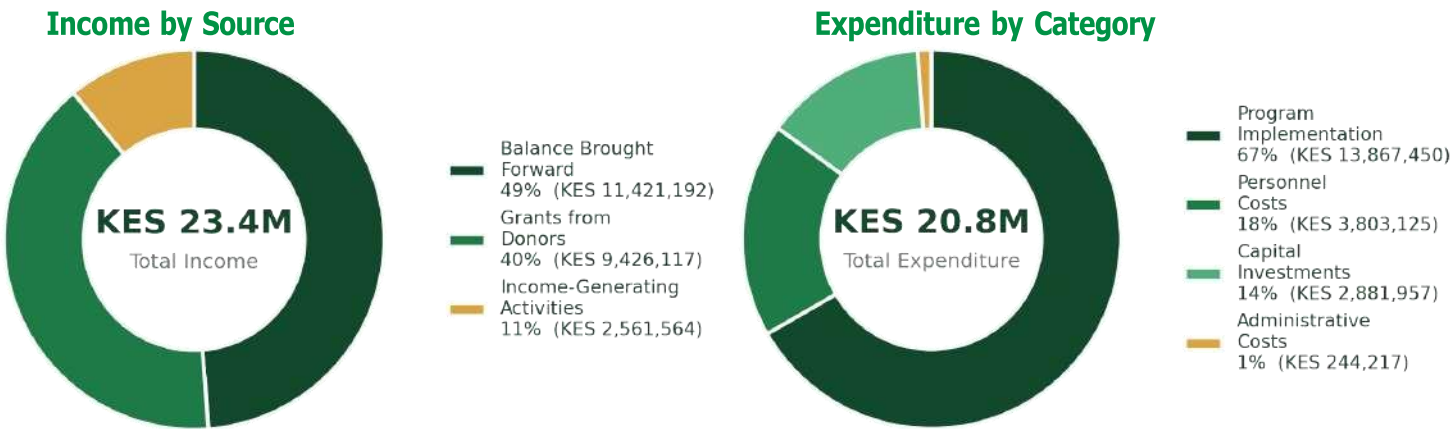
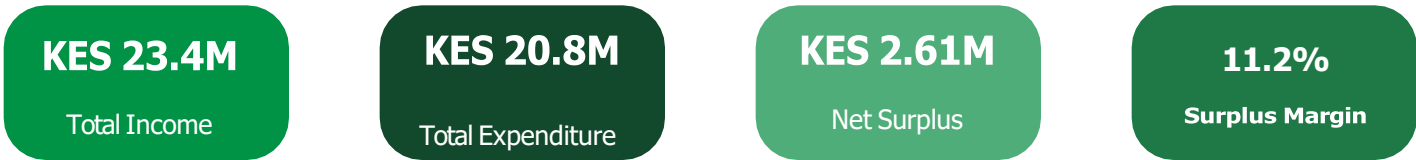
Read the full op-ed:

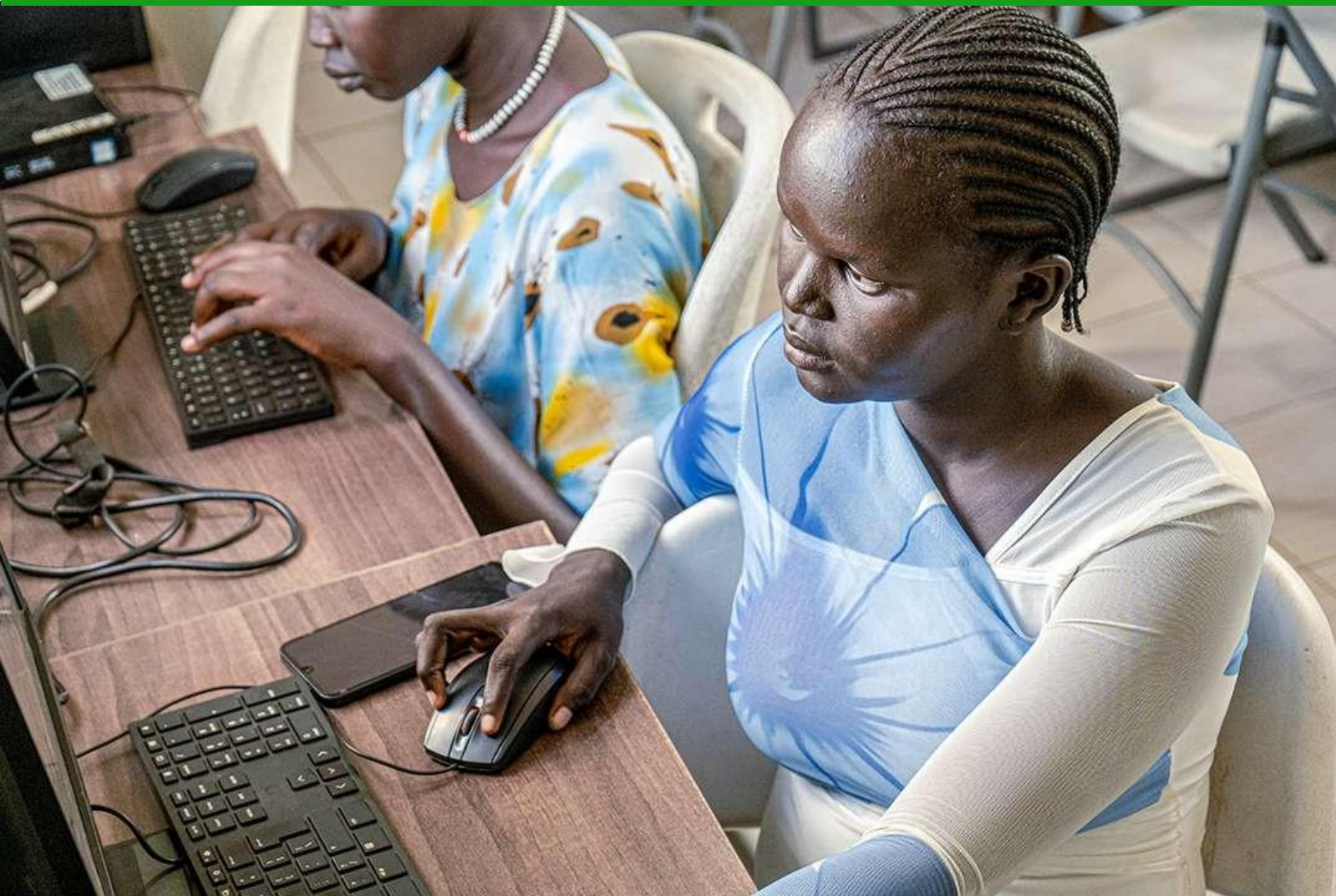
thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2026/04/28/humanitarian-system-celebrates-refugee-led-organisations-then-starves-them

7. From Rights on Paper to Access in Practice - Refugee Documentation Support Desk — Launched

SIR established a Refugee Documentation Support Desk (RDSD) at the SIR Digital Hub in Kakuma, a single, trusted access point helping refugee youth turn the Refugee Act (2021) and the Shirika Plan's promise of inclusion into practical reality. The Desk provides walk-in, one-on-one support and quarterly information clinics guiding youth through KRA PIN registration, Class M work permits, Convention Travel Document information, and RLO/community group registration, and connects complex cases to UNHCR, the Department of Refugee Services, KRA, and legal aid partners. In its first year, the Desk aims to support 200+ refugee youth, run four quarterly information clinics, and produce two evidence briefs to inform Shirika-aligned advocacy on the documentation barriers refugee youth face most often.

Financial Accountability





The First Paycheck That Restored Hope

At just 20 years old, Nyalual is already earning a living through multiple digital streams operating mini hubs, translating hymns across four languages for AOP Connect, and managing a client's TikTok account focused on computer sales. Her monthly income now totals over KSh 14,500, a figure that once seemed impossible for a young refugee woman in a camp where girls are traditionally expected to cook, bear children, and manage household chores.

But Nyalual's story is not just about personal success. It is about what becomes possible when refugee women are given real skills, real support, and real opportunities.

Nyalual arrived in Kakuma as part of a family of six. As the eldest sibling, she carries the weight of expectation and the burden of limited options. Camp schools are overcrowded. Quality education is scarce. And for girls from two distinct tribes where dowry and domestic duty define a woman's worth, the path to self-reliance is rarely paved.

She once dreamed of becoming a doctor. But like many young refugees facing closed doors, she enrolled in a computer literacy program simply to upgrade her skills. What she discovered was far more transformative: a career ambition she never knew she had.

Through Promoting sustainable socio-economic development and creating market-based livelihoods opportunities for refugees and host communities project, supported by the International Trade Centre (ITC) and KOICA, Nyalual transitioned from student to mentee to professional. After graduating, she secured a remote digital work opportunity in collaboration with our partner, Pawateck, where she earned her first income using the skills she had just learned.

Her earnings now serve a purpose larger than herself. She is working to relocate her younger brothers to better schools, escaping the overcrowded classrooms that limit so many children in the camp. When she brought home her first paycheck, she saw something she had rarely witnessed: the smiles on her parents' faces, and the relief that comes from changed perspective.

"In our community, women are expected to cook, give birth, take care of household chores, and bring in dowry. But now I am a perfect example of changing that perception."

— Nyalual Mabil Dual

In Kakuma, cultural barriers continue to keep many girls from fully participating in education and skills programs. To respond to this reality, our digital skills program run women-only cohorts that provide safe, inclusive spaces where young women can learn without stigma or interruption.

The program also integrated a crèche facility so mothers and caregivers can bring their children and continue learning while their little ones receive care nearby. This design choice does far more than add convenience; it removes a major barrier to participation and opens the door for countless women who would otherwise be excluded.

Nyalual's journey reflects the program's core approach: helping young women learn, earn, and lead change in their families and communities.

Nyalual's transformation was not achieved in isolation. It was

reinforced at home. Through quarterly parent engagement meetings and community co-creation sessions, the program brought parents into the digital model helping them understand not just what their daughters were learning, but why it mattered.

Her parents' support was not automatic. It was earned through visible impact. When they saw earnings replace dependency, their perspective shifted. Cultural assumptions began to crack. A new narrative took root: a girl with skills is an asset, not a liability.

This is the ripple effect of intentional design. When programs invest in community engagement alongside technical training, they do not just graduate students, they shift mindsets across generations.

Nyalual's ambitions stretch far beyond her current earnings. She dreams of returning home one day — not as a victim of displacement, but as a role model and builder. She wants to construct a school, educate girls like herself, and create a world where young women are listened to, trusted to lead, and given a voice.

"What seems hard at first becomes easier through consistency."

— Nyalual Mabil Dual

Her words capture the essence of what digital skills programs can unlock: not just employment, but self-belief, generational change, and community leadership.

Nyalual is one story. But in Kakuma and camps like it, thousands of young women remain untapped reservoirs of talent, creativity, and resilience. What they lack is not capability, it is opportunity structured around their realities.



Why Refugee Women Don't Need Saving, They Need Systems That Let Them Build

For years, humanitarian responses have treated refugee women as dependents capable of surviving, but rarely trusted to lead economic recovery on their own terms. Josylene Faïda's story challenges that logic. She arrived in Kakuma Refugee Camp in 2018 after fleeing political violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. A mother of seven, she did what millions of women do in crisis: she chose safety over certainty. Kakuma offered protection. What it did not offer was a pathway to stability.

Like many new arrivals, Josylene depended entirely on food assistance. Food rations kept her family alive, but they could not meet daily nutritional needs or restore the dignity that comes with providing for one's household. Back home, she had farmed. She produced food. She controlled outcomes. In the camp, that agency disappeared.

"Safety came first, but survival without income leaves you powerless."
— Josylene Faïda

Determined not to remain stuck between aid and unmet needs, Josylene joined a Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) and borrowed a small amount of capital to start selling clothes. The business helped her survive but barely. Most earnings were consumed immediately by food, school needs, and emergencies. Growth was impossible without structure, skills, or time to plan. This is where many refugee women are quietly filtered out of "economic empowerment" conversations not because they lack effort, but because systems expect results without providing the tools.

Through Lift One, Empower Two, Josylene received practical entrepreneurship training and startup support designed for women navigating poverty, care work, and exclusion from formal finance. She learned how to track sales, how to plan working hours, and how to anticipate seasonal demand instead of reacting to daily crises. For the first time, her business was no longer just labor it was strategy.

Today, Josylene sells bags and shoes to families in her community. Parents buy school bags. Workers buy everyday essentials. During peak seasons, especially when schools reopen, she can earn up to KES 5,000 daily in sales. Slower months bring less sometimes nothing but the difference is predictability.

"I won't say the business is perfect, but it is stable. And stability changes everything."

— Josylene Faida

Josylene reinvests her profits through her savings group, lending and earning interest rather than letting money sit idle. Income now comes from two sources: trade and savings growth. This matters not because the numbers are extraordinary, but because the control is hers. She plans carefully, balancing immediate family needs with long-term goals. Her next step is expansion into teenage, infant, and women's clothing.

"I have many responsibilities. Planning is how I meet them."

— Josylene Faida

Today, Josylene no longer relies solely on aid. She relies on her skills, her planning, and her work. Her journey reflects a broader truth often ignored in humanitarian systems: refugee women do not lack resilience. They lack access to capital, to skills, and to systems designed with their realities in mind.

"By investing in me, you didn't just help my family. You helped me contribute to society."

— Josylene Faida

Through Lift One, Empower Two, SIR backs women like Josylene not as beneficiaries, but as builders of local economies. This is not about charity. It is about shifting power, trust, and opportunity so refugee women can do what they have always done: build.

Read more inspiring stories of change at the link below: <https://www.sirafrica.org/impacts#story>



Huru Garden Social Enterprise - A Safe Place to Be a Family

[Kakuma hosts over 300,000 refugees and asylum seekers](#), most of them children and youth. Yet inside the camp, there had never been a single safe, formal space where a family could simply relax together. To reach one, families had to travel into Kakuma town an average cost of KES 400 many could not spare and race back home.

SIR faced a challenge of its own: like most refugee-led organisations, it depended heavily on restricted donor funding that could disappear without warning. SIR needed two things at once a real answer to the community's need for safe recreation, and a way to earn its own income so it could stand on steadier ground.

In September 2024, with funding from the Danish Refugee Council through the Danida Sustainable Model Programme, SIR commissioned a feasibility study that scored a family recreation centre highest among six income-generating ideas, at 74.5%. What began as a water slide, a trampoline, and a bouncing castle has grown into Huru Garden, Kakuma's first multifunctional recreation centre now including an event hall, an outdoor play area, a cafeteria, and a swimming pool.

The centre proved its worth in the hardest moment. In early 2025, during the USAID funding crisis, SIR lost major donor support overnight. Income from Huru Garden allowed SIR to rehire a Digital Marketing Facilitator who had just been let go, and to keep a digital skills training programme running until 45 refugee and host community youth completed it.

"When the funding stopped, I thought I would lose my job and our students would lose their training. Huru Garden kept us going. I came back to work, and not one student missed a class." — Abdulkadir Jeylani, Digital Marketing Facilitator

Huru Garden currently runs four of its five planned business units. Once fully operational, SIR projects the centre will generate KES 10 million a year dependable, unrestricted income by December 2027 reducing SIR's reliance on donors and securing its programmes sustainability for years to come.

Our Team

Staff

Bahana Mirindi Hydrogene – Executive Director | Alice Longhor – Human Resources Officer | Idris Mursal - Advocacy and Community Engagement Officer | Joseph Lopir - Communication officer | Henri Malumalu - Finance Officer | Taylor Rutakangwa Shukuru- Monitoring and Evaluation Officer | Bior Duot Ajang – Documentation Support Officer | Manahil Shanta Kununa – Program Manager, Digital Skills | Nancy Kiriimi - Program Manager – Entrepreneurship & Financial Inclusion | Ramazani Mwemedi – IT Specialist Officer.

Board of Directors

Jessy Inga Volonte - Chairperson | Deline Ramiro - Resource Mobilization | Ikram Mohamed - Board Member | Maureen Nganga - Finance Portfolio | Bahana Mirindi Hydrogene - Secretary

Strategic Partners



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