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#WithRefugees
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Jean dreams of getting a PhD and publishing a book

He fled violence in Cote d'Ivoire in 2002 and wants to share his education with others.

“Like a grain of rice planted in the middle of the desert”, says one of Jean’s mentors. This is what Jean’s future looked like when he reached Liberia after escaping violence in Côte d’Ivoire. The desert did not count on Jean’s determination to pursue his dream.

“I was teaching in a small mission school in the town of Gbinta, near Danane, when, on 28 November 2002, gunmen fighting against then Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo, gained control of the town. Accusations of my support for the government put my life in danger, so I escaped, hid in the bush for three days before arriving in Liberia.”

Jean arrived in Liberia and was assisted by UNHCR to the Saclepea Refugee Camp in Nimba. “That is when the reality of being a refugee begun for me”, he reflects, “so many decisions that directly affected me were taken by others, so I decided to add value to my life by embarking on an academic journey.’

Jean attended night school in Saclepea to improve his English; and after passing the West African Examination Council (WAEC) exams in 2006, Cuttington University in Gbarnga, invited him to take the entry exam. The night before the test, Jean received a call from Cote d’Ivoire. His father had passed away.

**“I graduated in Arts, Public Administration, and
Peace and Conflict Resolution. I got the distinction
Magna Cum Laude!”**

“I took my exam in tears but I passed and was accepted. With the support of UNHCR and the Jesuit Refugee Service, I graduated in 2011 in Arts, Public Administration, and Peace and Conflict Resolution. I got the distinction Magna Cum Laude!” he proudly highlights while showing his graduation pictures.

**“You cannot allow yourself to be defeated.
Education will never fail me”**

For more than a year, Jean farmed cassava while applying for jobs. “Farming helped me deal with my frustrations. You cannot allow yourself to be defeated, and I knew that education would never fail me.” In 2012, Cuttington University offered him a Teaching Assistant position.

By 2016, he was a full Lecturer and held a degree in Educational Studies, and a Master of Arts Degree in teaching. What now? “My academic journey has just started! [Laughs]. My supervisor always says that to succeed in life I have to keep learning. So my next steps include getting a PhD in Education/Curriculum and Instruction and publishing my book. I have the responsibility to give back to my community. I have two homes now, Liberia and Cote d’Ivoire.”



Jean teaching Sociology



Jean outside his office in Cuttington University



Jean gets his master's degree



Jean speaking to some of his students at the university