

# Skills training restores hope for refugees

BY MARKO TAIBOT

**ADJUMANI.** Since fleeing violence in South Sudan, many refugee youth lost hope and sank into despair after abandoning the lives and activities they once knew.

When resettled in various refugee settlements across Adjumani District, some struggled to find meaningful engagement. Many turned to abusing drugs and alcohol and idling in trading centres after dropping out of school.

But today, vulnerable refugee and host-community youth are gradually regaining hope after enrolling in a skills-training programme designed to restore purpose and hope. Having long grappled with the effects of displacement, unemployment, and limited prospects, the trainees said the programme has become more than a classroom; it's a pathway to dignity, confidence, and a renewed sense of direction.

Through practical courses such as tailoring, agribusiness, mobile phone repair, carpentry, bakery, and entrepreneurship, the project equips participants with hands-on skills that can quickly translate into income-generating work.

## Beneficiaries

Among the beneficiaries is 22-year-old Nancy Anzoo, a refugee from Mir-eye Settlement. She dropped out in Primary Six after losing her father during the conflict in South Sudan. One of five children raised by a single mother, Anzoo says life became increasingly difficult after arriving in Uganda.

"I lost my father during the war, and when we came to Uganda in 2016, my mother could not afford school fees for all of us. The skills I have attained can now shape my future," she said on Sunday.

Before joining the training, Anzoo supported her mother in small business activities. She is now pursuing tailoring, a skill she believes will make her self-reliant.

Similarly, 19-year-old mother of two Eveline Movura also dropped out of school in P.6 due to lack of fees. Movura is currently training in bakery, a trade she considers both marketable and empowering.

"I thought joining this skills training would help me stand strong because I will have a skill that stays with me for life. That is why I chose bakery—it is lucrative," she said.

The Palm Corps project manager for the Refugees and Host Community Youth Empowerment and Transformation Initiative, Mr Alexander Andama, said the four-year project, funded by the MasterCard Foundation, aims to make young people more self-reliant and resilient.

"Its main goal is to build the socio-economic resiliency of young people aged 16 to 35. We hope they will live better lives and forget what they experienced in the past," he said.

"We target 70 percent refugees and 30 percent host communities, with a goal of reaching 60 percent young women and 40 percent young men," he added.