

The book cover features a vibrant pink background with a large, light pink circular area containing the title. On the left, a woman with dark skin and hair is shown in profile, wearing a white patterned top. In the center, a woman in a green patterned outfit and headwrap looks forward. On the right, a woman with dark skin and hair is shown in profile, wearing a red top and large white headphones. A microphone is positioned in the lower center. The title 'The Girl Who Fought for Freedom' is written in a mix of white and red cursive fonts. Below the title, the subtitle 'And Other Stories of Courage' is in white sans-serif. The author's name 'By Bigoa Chuol' is in red cursive. A decorative wavy line separates the subtitle from the author's name. In the top right corner, there are illustrations of feathers and a traditional headpiece.

*The Girl*  
*Who Fought*  
*for Freedom*

And Other Stories of Courage

By

*Bigoa Chuol*





*The Girl  
Who Fought  
for Freedom*

And Other Stories of Courage



By

*Bigoa Chuol*

1 Foreword

2 The Girl Who Braved the Impossible

3 The Girl Who Came Back to Help Her  
Country

4 The Girl Who Made Millions Listen

5 The Girl Who Taught Other Girls to Dream

6 The Girl Who Defied Traditions

7 The Girl Who Said “No”

8 The Girl Who Brings Cultures Together

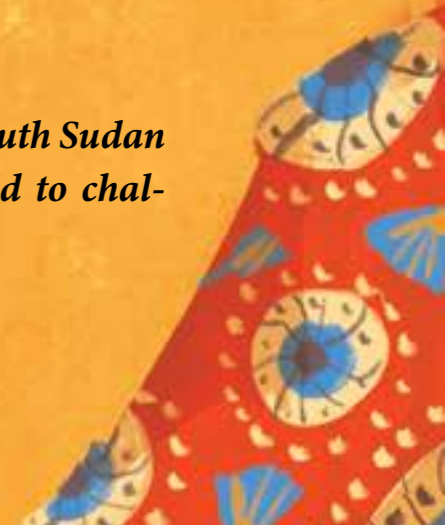
9 The Girl Who Fought for Freedom

10 The Girl Who Wrote These Beautiful  
Stories (Author’s Bio)

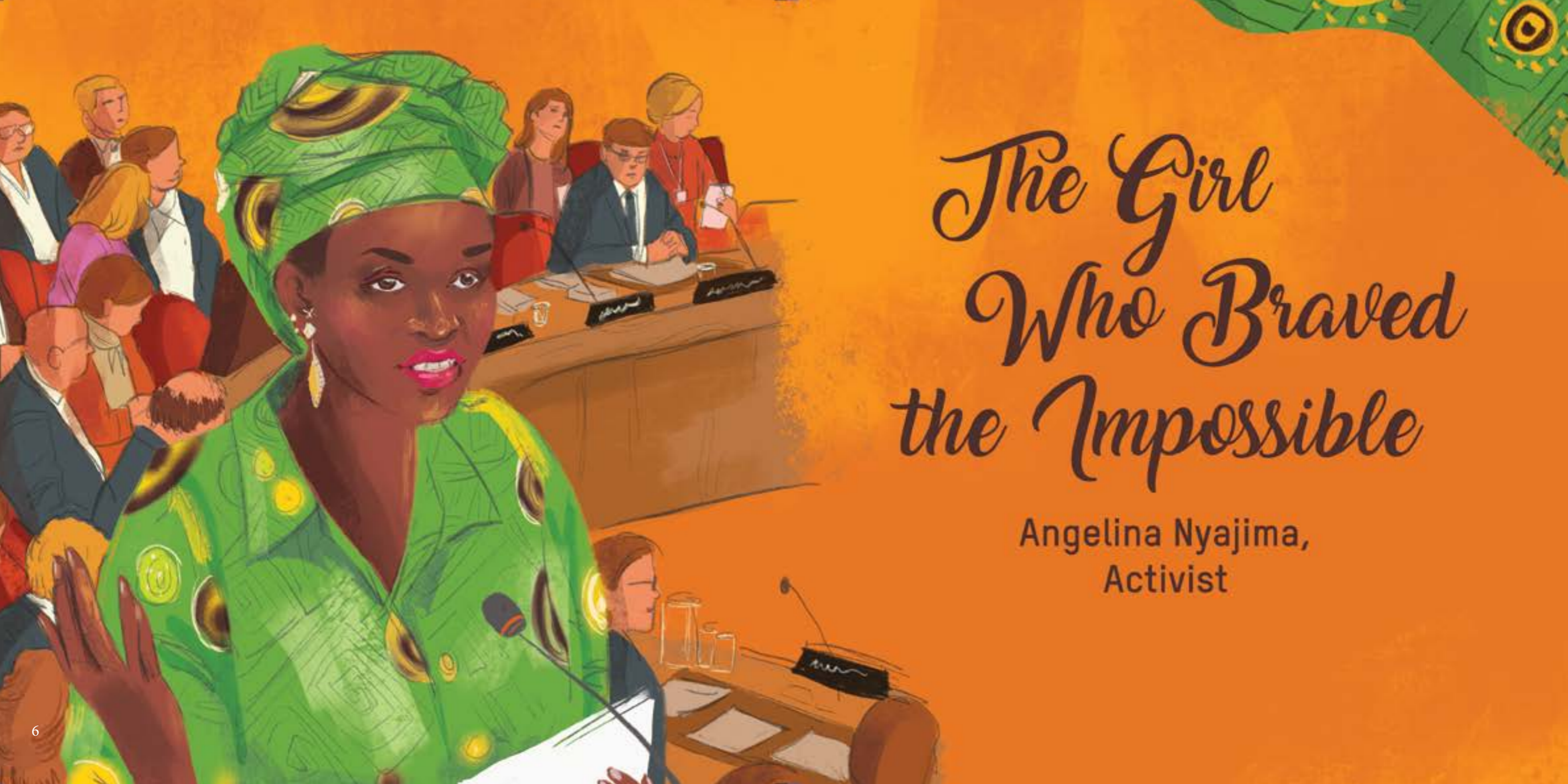
# Foreword

*South Sudan is a country filled with real-life stories of women and girls who hope, who dream, who fight to change the world around them – but often, these stories are not told. The Girl Who Fought for Freedom and Other Stories of Courage is one of the many efforts to bring to the surface these stories so that they will be told and retold over and over. So that they will not be forgotten, so that the world will be constantly reminded that South Sudanese women and girls are unstoppable when it comes to shaping a better society. A society that sees them as equal to men and boys. This book is just the beginning. It is a fraction of the diverse culture of South Sudan – and these stories are a glimpse of the real-life tales of countless of women heroes in the country.*

*This book is for all the women and girls of South Sudan who continue to dream, to love, to fight and to challenge what is not right. This book is for you.*







# *The Girl Who Braved the Impossible*

Angelina Nyajima,  
Activist



War destroys homes, but it won't stop young girls from dreaming. And as Angelina shows, they can even brave the impossible to reach those dreams.

When war came, Angelina was only two. Her family left their home in Leer County to find safety in other lands. Little did they know that the long journey was just the beginning of many seemingly impossible things little Angelina would overcome.

On their journey, there was very little to eat, many people were falling sick, and some did not make it. Finally, they reached Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya.





Life was hard in the camp. The two-hour walk to school on an empty stomach made studying hard. But even before Angelina knew how education could change her life, she remained determined.

Eventually her aunt came to take her to a place that was closer to school- a town called Kitale in Kenya. It was bitterly cold, but she was thrilled to study. After some time, she moved again with her aunt to Nairobi. In Nairobi, school fees were high, so she had to stay home. She was also so far away from her mother, who stayed behind in Kakuma, and, oh, she missed her!

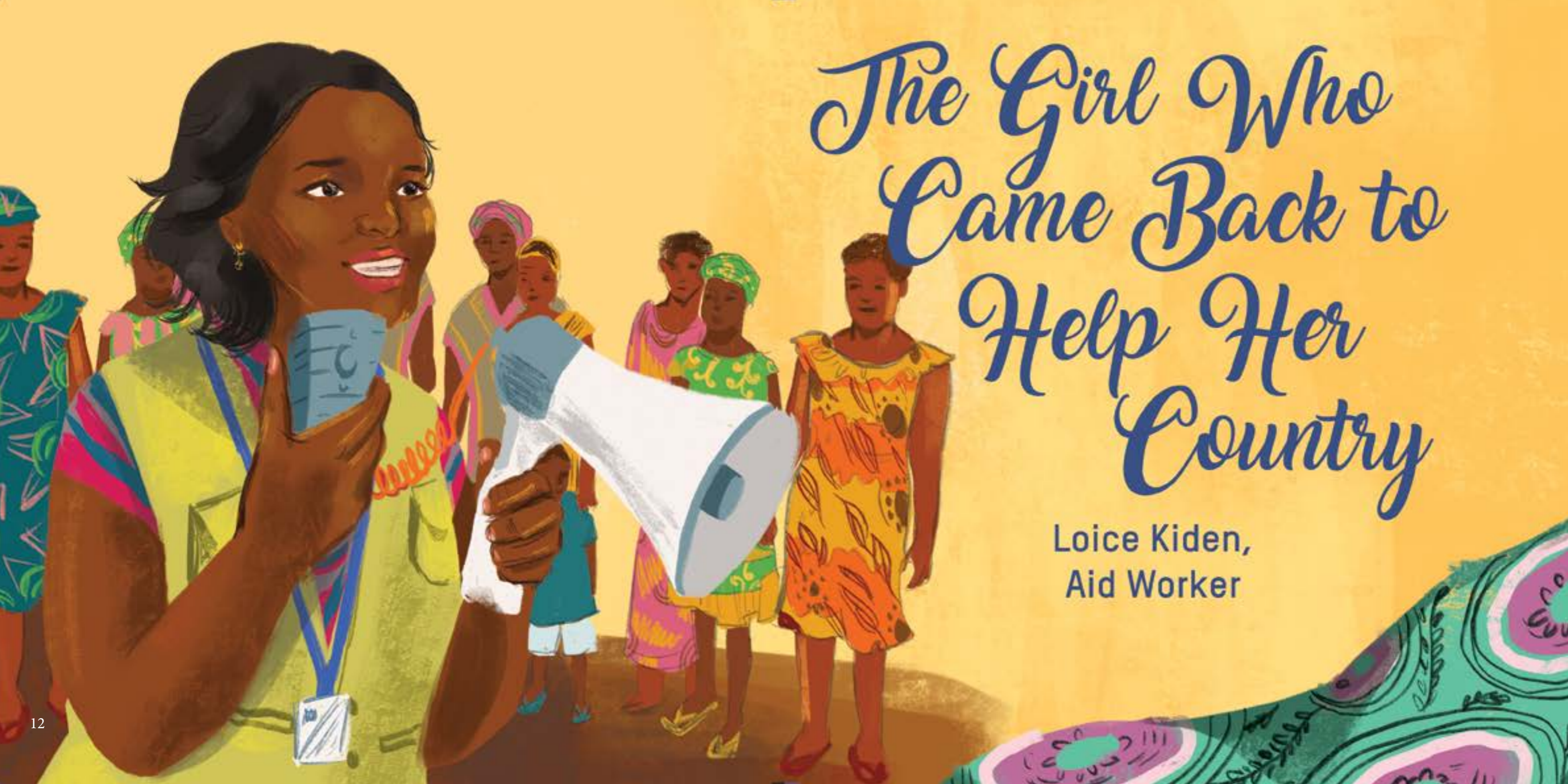
After many years of hardship, change appeared in Angelina's life in many ways. She met kind people ready to support her to go to school. Then, she turned to modeling so she could make money for her school fees. There was nothing that would stop Angelina from pursuing her studies, even if it meant working twice as hard, always braving the impossible. She thought education was a door to better opportunities. And she was absolutely right.

This was what made Angelina grow up to be a strong and intelligent woman. She is able to use her knowledge and passion for change to support the women of South Sudan. She has helped hundreds of women earn money by teaching them how to bake bread and plant vegetables. She has also reunited over 300 children with their families. And she has even represented South Sudanese women at a United Nations conference in New York, speaking before diplomats from countries across the world.

“Women and girls must be able to study, so they can be self-reliant and embrace the possibilities of a bright future.”



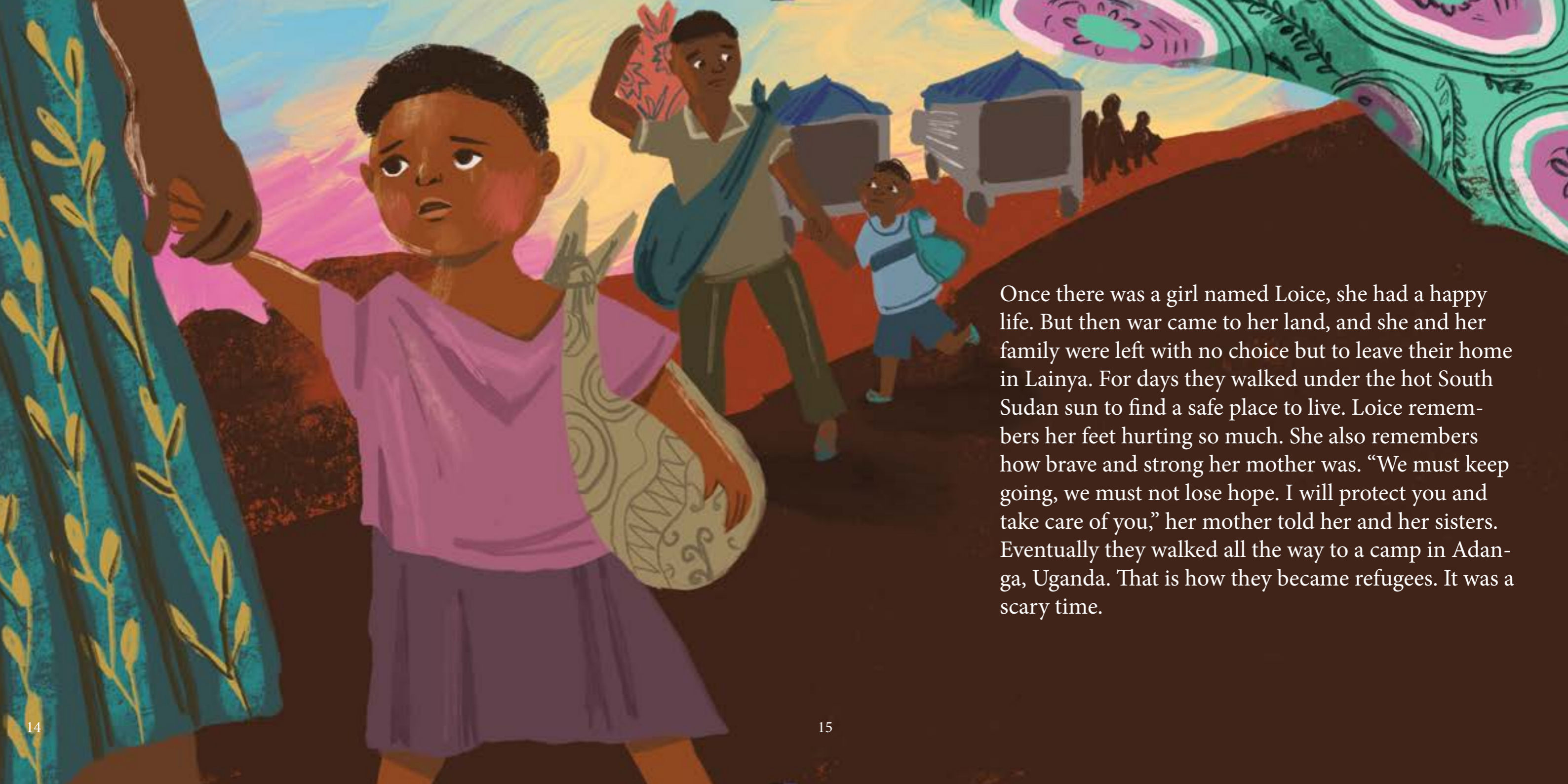




# The Girl Who Came Back to Help Her Country

Loice Kiden,  
Aid Worker





Once there was a girl named Loice, she had a happy life. But then war came to her land, and she and her family were left with no choice but to leave their home in Lainya. For days they walked under the hot South Sudan sun to find a safe place to live. Loice remembers her feet hurting so much. She also remembers how brave and strong her mother was. “We must keep going, we must not lose hope. I will protect you and take care of you,” her mother told her and her sisters. Eventually they walked all the way to a camp in Adanga, Uganda. That is how they became refugees. It was a scary time.



Many years later, she didn't think that the war would come to South Sudan again. As a new country, it should be safe. Children should run around playing and laughing with friends. Going to school with big smiles on their faces and looking forward to fun and exciting books to read in the classroom.

But war returned. This time, Loice was able to go back equipped with a good education. She used what she learned in school so she can help bring clean water to people in remote villages where deep wells had been destroyed by the fighting. She would also use her knowledge by standing up for peace. She would stand up for the women, children, and all people of South Sudan on radio, in neighbourhood meetings, wherever she could.

“All communities deserve good homes, work to go to, and plenty of food to eat” she would remark. “When there is harmony, neighbours trust, care and support each other. No one harms another person”.

There are millions of people like her, they are tired of living

scared. They know if they work together there is power to seek a better and joyful life. In time, change will come!

Loice wants women's voices to be loud and proud. For all communities to be strong, where people aren't forced to be silent, but can speak up when things are not right.

Everyone is equal, no one is more important. Loice knows that for peace to last, everybody must join hands!







# *The Girl Who Made Millions Listen*

Mama Hellen Samuel,  
Journalist





Once there was a girl whose voice was heard by hundreds of thousands, some say, even millions. Mama Hellen has worked for over 35 years as a broadcast journalist. But her journey over the years was not easy.

The world can sometimes be unfair to women. When a woman wants to work and dream big dreams, many people cannot accept this. They feel her only place is in the home and taking care of children. But Mama Hellen is a bold woman who works hard for her dreams. She knows that anything she sets her mind to, she can do as well as anybody else.





She learned that pursuing work in radio as a woman was much harder compared to when you are a man.

Her husband did not understand her ambition and discouraged her at first. Juggling a busy family life and work in radio was tiring. But with the help of relatives, she was able to save energy to keep working.

Men could make the world of journalism unfriendly and unsafe for women like Mama Hellen. They did not show women respect. They would constantly hassle and bother women, then attempt to force them to do things they did not want to.

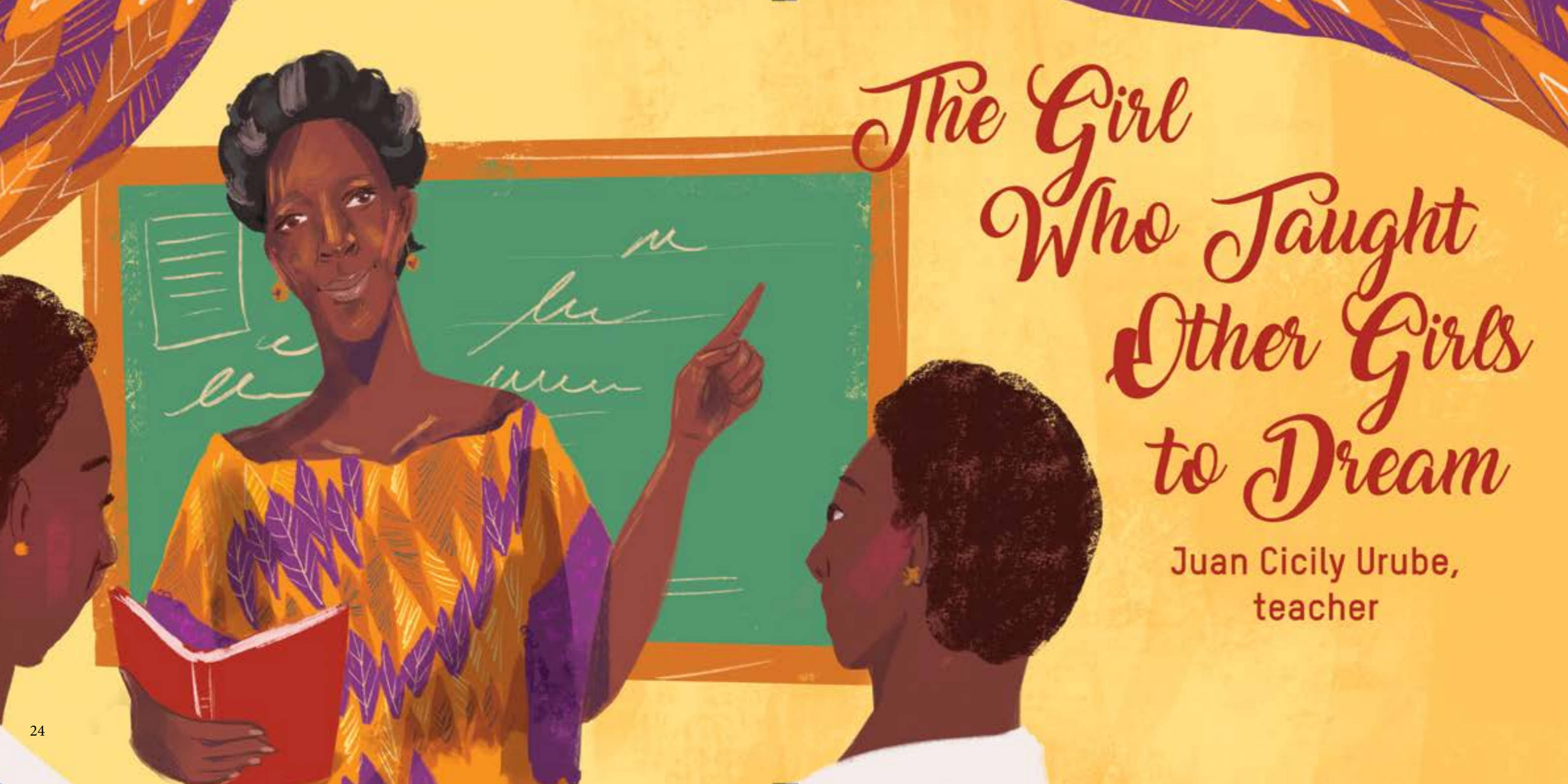
Mama Hellen worked hard to prove these men that women have the equal right to be on radio like them. She worked hard, even if there were nights when she got very little sleep. Work was challenging, but she did not let this stop

her from becoming better. She was strong and talented, and her hard work paid off. She became one of the most respected radio broadcasters in South Sudan.

At 58 years old and a senior broadcaster, Mama Hellen uses her women's radio show to continue to challenge the ways communities try to silence the voices of women. She is not afraid to talk honestly about issues that affect women, so they can be changed. This is her most rewarding work.







*The Girl  
Who Taught  
Other Girls  
to Dream*

Juan Cicily Urube,  
teacher



Once there was a girl who dreamed big dreams. She dreamed of a good life and a good family. After Cicily grew up, she formed a family of her own but did not know then that life would pose many challenges.

One day, she lost her husband to a tragedy, she was left alone with no one to support her and her family. She was worried that she wouldn't be able to care for her children. She was always told that she couldn't make it without the support of a husband. Cicily knew she would have to find way.





Cicily moved to Juba to look for a better life. Determined and armed with a college education, this was going to be her chance. Her search was successful. She started teaching in primary and secondary schools, which then led to teaching those who could not afford to go to school. Her work was so fantastic other organisations were eager to work with her.

Teaching brought Cicily so much joy. She could make a difference, encourage others to dream and give them a better chance at life with the new skills they learned.

She even taught adults whose education was interrupted by being forced to be a child soldier or other terrible events. She taught them to dream and told them it's never too late to go back to school.

Best of all, Cicily was able to take care of her children on her own, feed them and send them to school.

“Believe in yourself,” she would say. “Do you see my house; this is the result of my hard work.”

Bad things may have happened in her life, but she kept working hard to make her dreams come true. “This is what education does; it helps you grow up to be a strong woman.” She encourages all the young girls: “Do not depend on anyone, you have all the power you need inside you.”







# *The Girl Who Defied Traditions*

Awal Susan,  
Basketball coach




Growing up, Awal always loved sports. Be it handball, football, or volleyball; name the game and she already played it as a young girl growing up in Rumbek.

Awal was lucky to have a family who supported her love for sports. Her mother worked diligently day and night selling small clothes and tea, so that Awal and her siblings got the best education. Her elder brother then inspired her to start to play basketball.







“My mother is my source of strength and inspiration. She worked hard so I can graduate from the University of Juba,” she said.

A while later, she became one of the first women to be selected from Rumbek to compete in a state basketball competition in Wau. Deeply disappointed that her team did not win, she trained harder to play even better the next time.

When Awal decided to continue her passion and become a basketball coach, this alarmed many people in her community, including some members of her family. “Women should not coach basketball,” they would say. “Women should just be one way.” But Awal wouldn’t let the words of others stop her or ruin her day. “I have the skill, I have the knowledge, and everyone knows I can play!”

She jumped high, she ran fast, she scored goals, she played basketball really well. She was ready to be a great coach, you could tell. She defied voices who discouraged her. “I am a

woman and I can be a good coach too!” she declared.

Awal went on to coach players who have gone to play in the biggest leagues in other parts of the world and represent South Sudan. It isn’t always easy; there are times she doesn’t have money to attend training or times when it is a challenge to balance basketball and school.

Still, Awal is excited to get better as a coach and is always working on improving her skills. She hopes to train in the United States and bring back the knowledge to keep improving the players in South Sudan. For now, she continues to inspire other women and girls to get into sports.








# *The Girl Who Said "No"*

Hellen Poni,  
law student





Hellen's home is South Sudan. For five years now, a needless war has raged on. It has made life very hard for everyone. Families cannot feed themselves, care for their children or keep them safe.

In school, Hellen works hard and does well. She wants a happy future serving her community.



One afternoon, a man pretending to be her friend tricked her into coming to his house. He betrayed her trust and hurt her badly. Pained and ashamed she wanted to hide it forever. She was only 16 years old.

After a while her stomach started to grow. She was taken to the clinic, they told her she was going to have a baby.

Shockingly, the only solution her family could see was to marry the man that had hurt her, and to get the dowry of cattle and money. But she was far too young. Hellen bravely protested, marrying the man that hurt her would end her dreams. Her strong will and determined spirit angered her father and he cast her away.

But she wouldn't give up on her school. Left all alone,

she borrowed money from a relative for school fees and got a small job at a salon to feed her child. "I knew my education already had a higher purpose" said Hellen.

She carried a lot of courage to fight for freedom. With education, her dream now is to be a lawyer who helps protect the health and happiness of girls.

Helen bravely escaped; her story encourages everyone to work together to end the tragedy of child marriage. Every young girl deserves to explore all the possibilities for a bright and joyful life.







# *The Girl Who Brings Cultures Together*

Akuja de Garang,  
Fashion designer





# Juba

FASHION SHOW

Once there was a girl who fell in love with her country's many creations and colours. South Sudan is home to many unique cultures, languages, and people, and they all hold a special place in Akuja's heart.

The long conflict drove many families away to neighbouring countries, including Akuja and her family. She was very young when they left Juba.





In another country, she studied hard. Then she learned that war could make songs disappear, it could destroy beautiful paintings, it could ruin the lives of those who make them. “All this beauty, all these talents, they should live on and bloom!”

When Akuja returned to her land, she was full of excitement. This was her chance to work with people who were putting back together their country, when it was left in tatters because of the war. “The long war meant long years of suffering, the people needed to become well again, to heal,” she said.

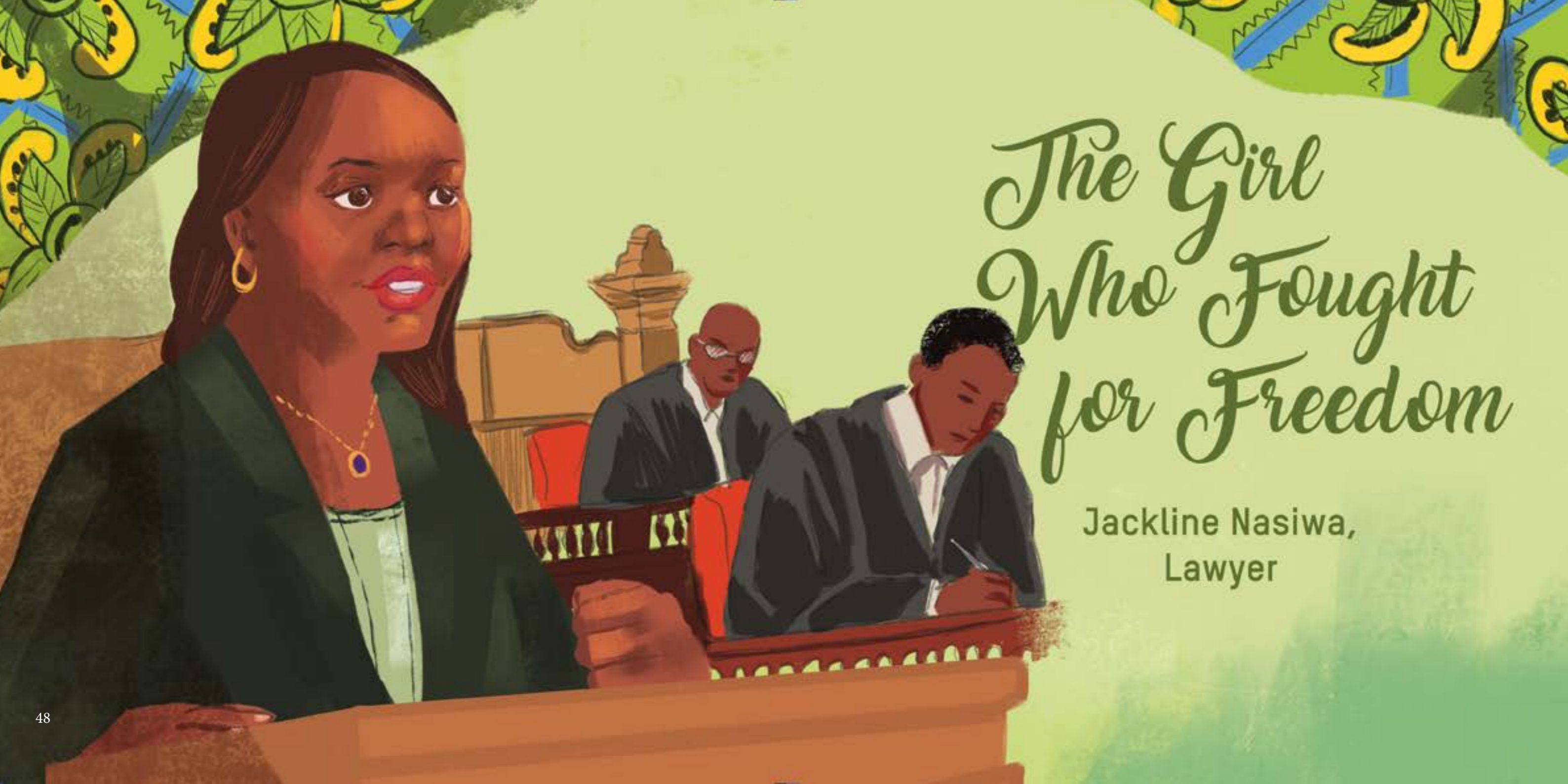
Akuja helped girls so, like the boys, they could go to school. She started providing grants for school fees so that no girl had to drop out “No one should stop a girl from studying, from dreaming, from achieving,” she thinks.

Akuja is also a fantastic fashion designer and uses art for peace making. She organised a fashion show in Juba that brought together many communities. There was so much joy in the atmosphere, and music, poetry, art, crafts and traditional dancing.

Akuja is a powerful spokeswoman for development and care of art makers. “Artists offer us a gift...we must preserve it for the future” she says.

There are rare talented craft makers that can turn bullets in to beautiful bangles. Akuja wants to support artists to keep making that precious art. It is challenging but she refuses to give up. The important impact of her work has been recognised by great leaders from all around in the world.

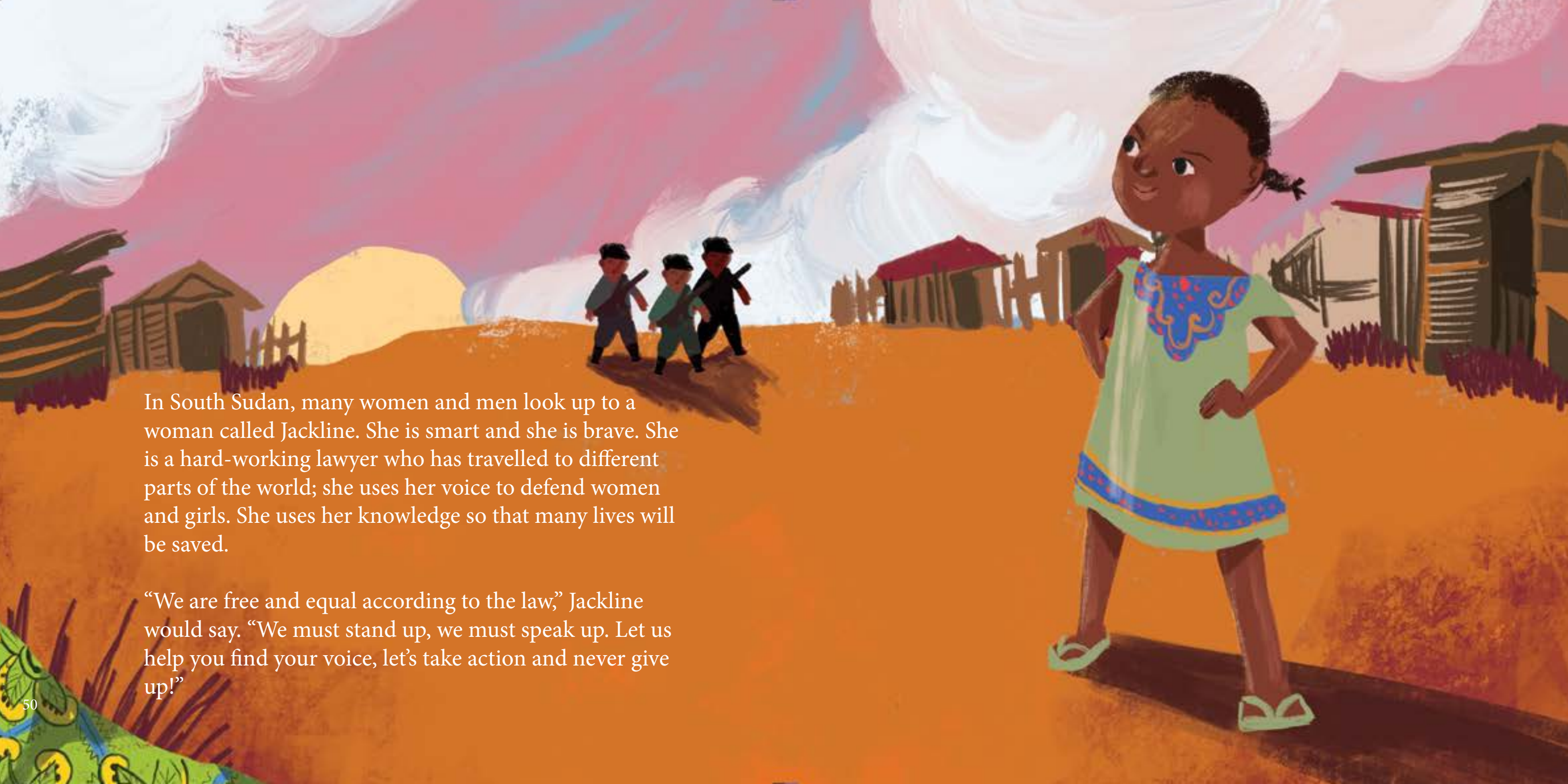




# *The Girl Who Fought for Freedom*

Jackline Nasiwa,  
Lawyer



An illustration of a woman in a green dress with a blue patterned collar and hem, standing in a village. In the background, three men in dark clothing and caps are walking away, carrying rifles. The scene is set against a sunset sky with large white clouds and a yellow sun. The ground is orange-brown, and there are simple wooden buildings in the background.

In South Sudan, many women and men look up to a woman called Jackline. She is smart and she is brave. She is a hard-working lawyer who has travelled to different parts of the world; she uses her voice to defend women and girls. She uses her knowledge so that many lives will be saved.

“We are free and equal according to the law,” Jackline would say. “We must stand up, we must speak up. Let us help you find your voice, let’s take action and never give up!”



With her mastery of the law as her shield, she is determined to fight for women and girls' freedom: freedom from cruel behaviour and harmful traditions. She supports communities so that they can demand from leaders; better treatment and access to things that can make life better.

Jackline grew up witnessing violence, so she believes in the importance of her work. She believed it so much that she used her own money to start an organisation.

As a young girl, the war drove them away from their home in Yei into a refugee camp in Uganda. It was not a good place for children. Armed men would snatch students on the way to school, it was dangerous. To get a better education they moved to another camp. But the calm did not last long. One day her school was attacked by fighters with big guns and some students were kidnapped. She quickly moved to another school. It was chaos. What an awful thing had happened to those kidnapped.

Even through dark times, she continued her studies. She worked hard and it was rewarded by scholarship after scholarship, until she became a great lawyer. But she did not forget the other children who missed school because of war and chaos. She knows they are smart people who just lack opportunities. With education, children can shape South Sudan into a peaceful and wonderful place.

Up to now, she continues to fight for the right of women to lead and shape South Sudan. She continues to look for like-minded people who will join her to protect the well-being of South Sudanese women and children.





© Oxfam International, December 2019

*This book was written by Bigoa Chuol and illustrated by Abigail Montana-Santillan; edited by Rhea Catada and Kathryn Achilles; book design by Rhea Catada; with support from Elysia Buchanan and Akuot Susan; Alex Shoebridge, Else Østergaard, and Irene Fredriksson of Oxfam IBIS; Martin Lubajo, Guo Rose, Rose Diko, and the rest of Oxfam in South Sudan's Education Team.*

*This storybook project is made possible through the funding of the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) – Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

*Photos on pages 23, 35, and 40 by Bullen Chol/Oxfam*



**MINISTRY OF  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
OF DENMARK**  
*Danida*



**OXFAM**



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

## *Bigoa Chuol*

Bigoa is a South Sudanese writer, poet and facilitator. An active practitioner in community engaged arts and creative project development. She is a fellow of Melbourne University Social Equity Institute.

Her more recent writing explores the reverberations of war time displacement in the diaspora on gender equality, language and memory. She is currently working on a collection of essays





**MINISTRY OF  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
OF DENMARK**

*Danida*



**OXFAM**