

khuluma 



Young
Brave
Dreaming

**Stories of
Khuluma Mentors
in South Africa**

2025



***The future belongs
to those who believe
in the beauty of
their dreams***

Nelson Mandela

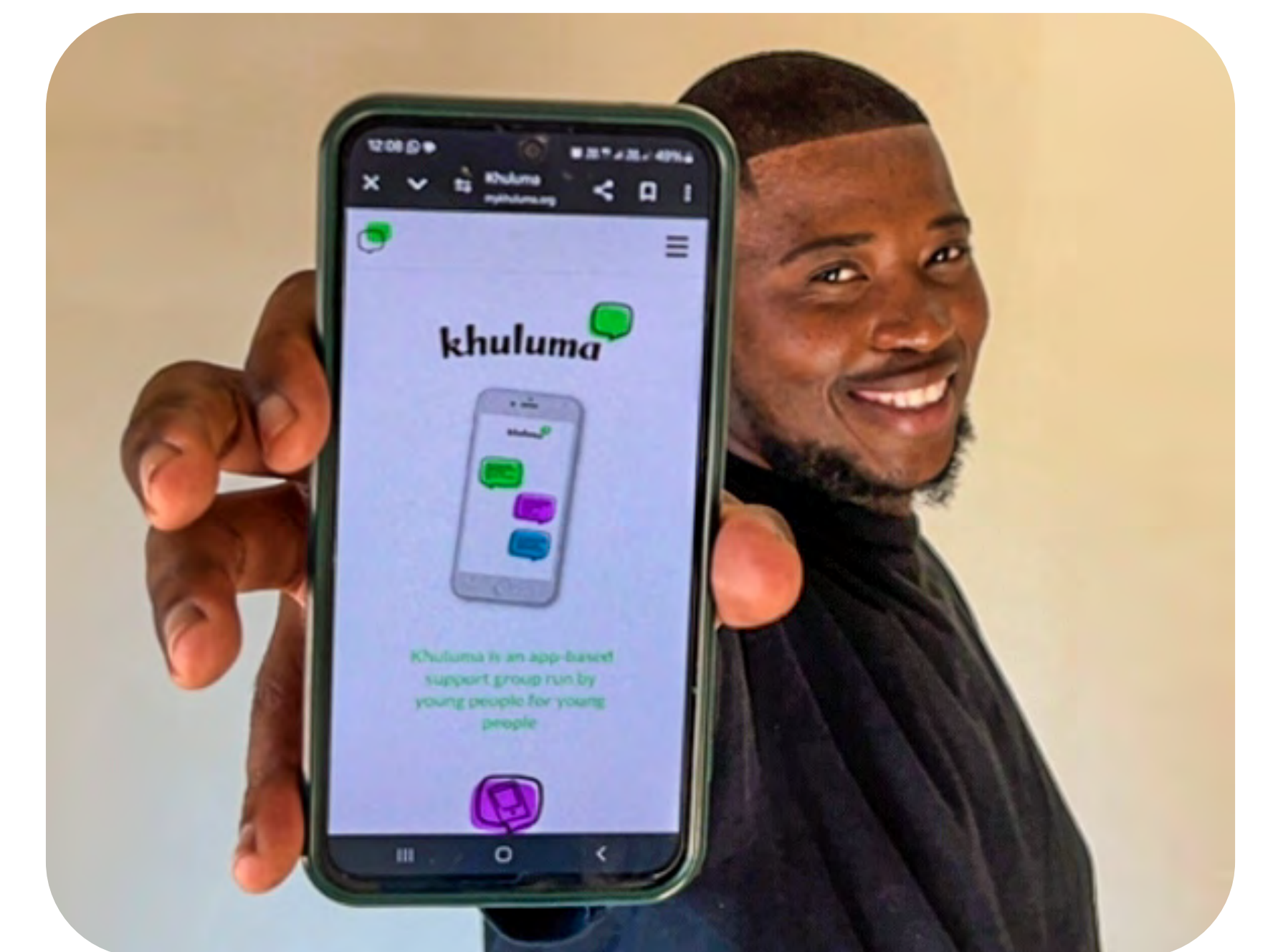
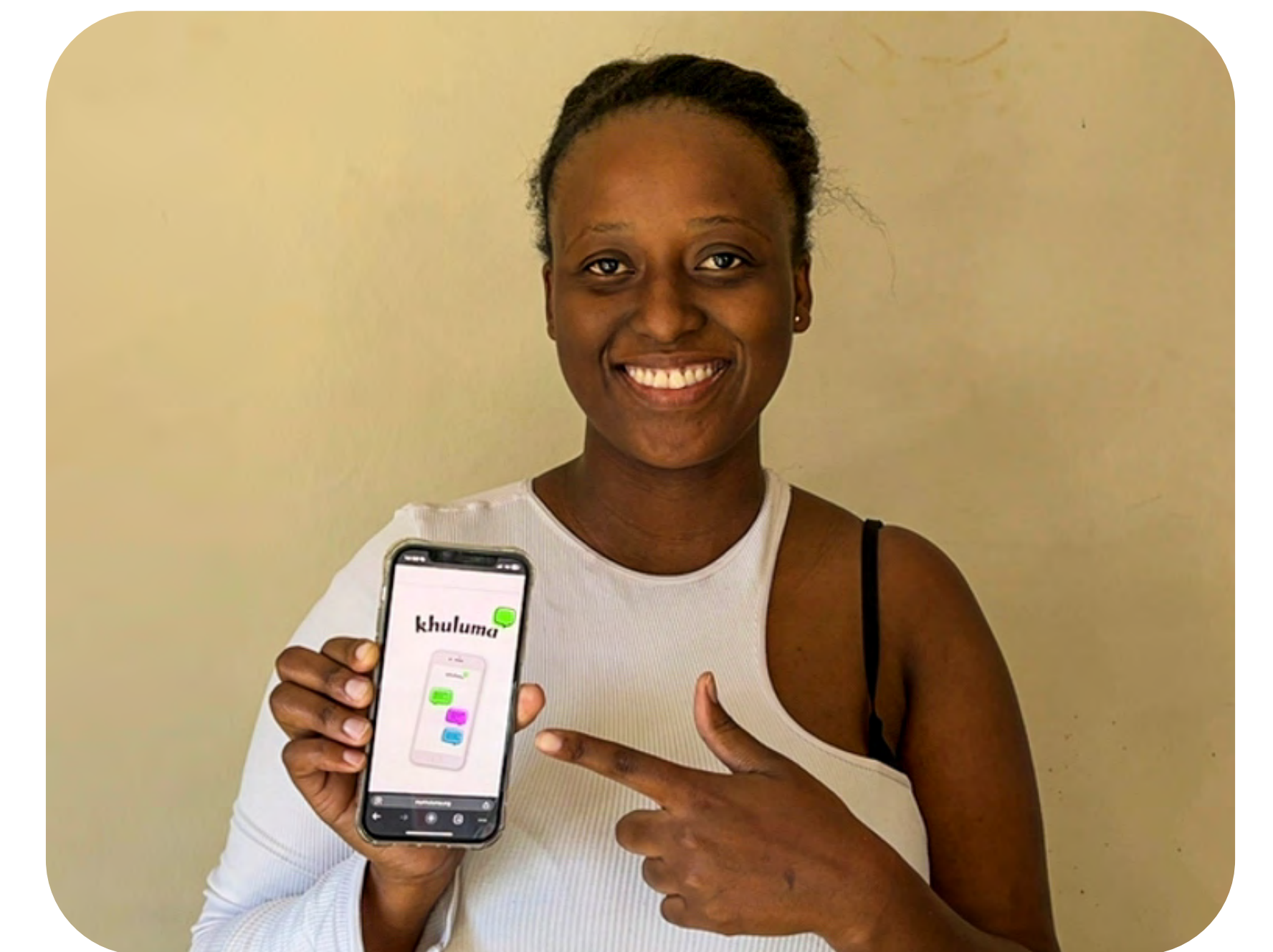
Introduction

Khuluma is a South Africa-based initiative offering psychosocial support to young people living with HIV, primarily through digital peer-led support groups. Following these groups, selected participants are invited to join our mentorship programme.

Mentors are young people who provide peer-to-peer support, while also receiving ongoing psychosocial, educational, and personal development opportunities from the Khuluma team. Through their involvement, mentors also engage in activities such as research, skills-building, and wellbeing sessions.

This visual photostory series invites you into the **lives of three Khuluma mentors—each joining our community at different moments, discovering hope, friendships, and a sense of family along the way.** Narrated in their own voices, with photos captured remotely over FaceTime by award-winning photographer Elizabeth Dalziel, these mentors share intimate reflections from their youthful dreams, through the paths they've courageously shaped, and into their evolving aspirations as they explore new possibilities.

Now, standing confidently where dreams meet reality, they've discovered fresh roles, new dreams, and deep fulfilment. **These are self-authored stories of transformation, resilience, and the unstoppable magic of dreaming.**



Pinky

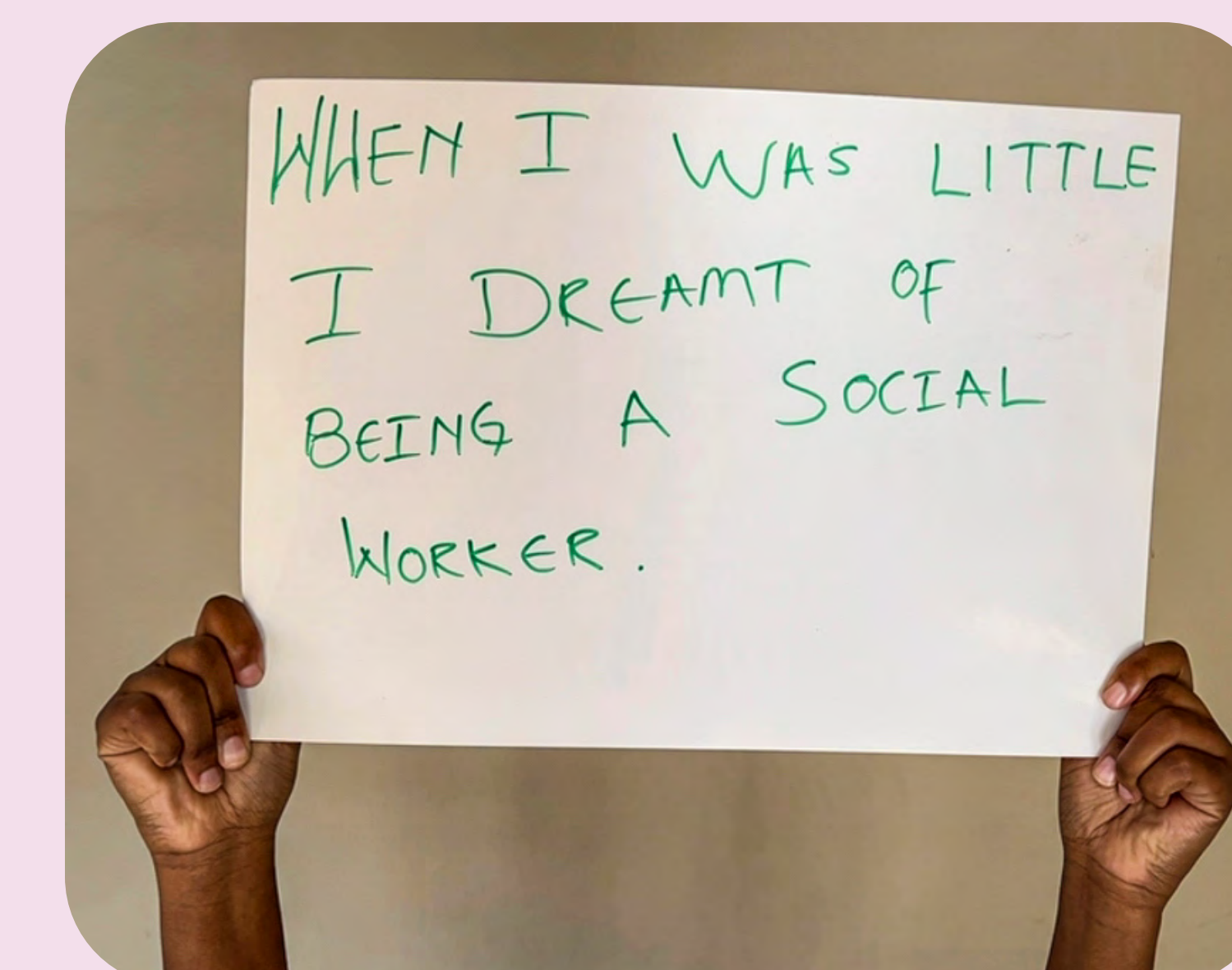
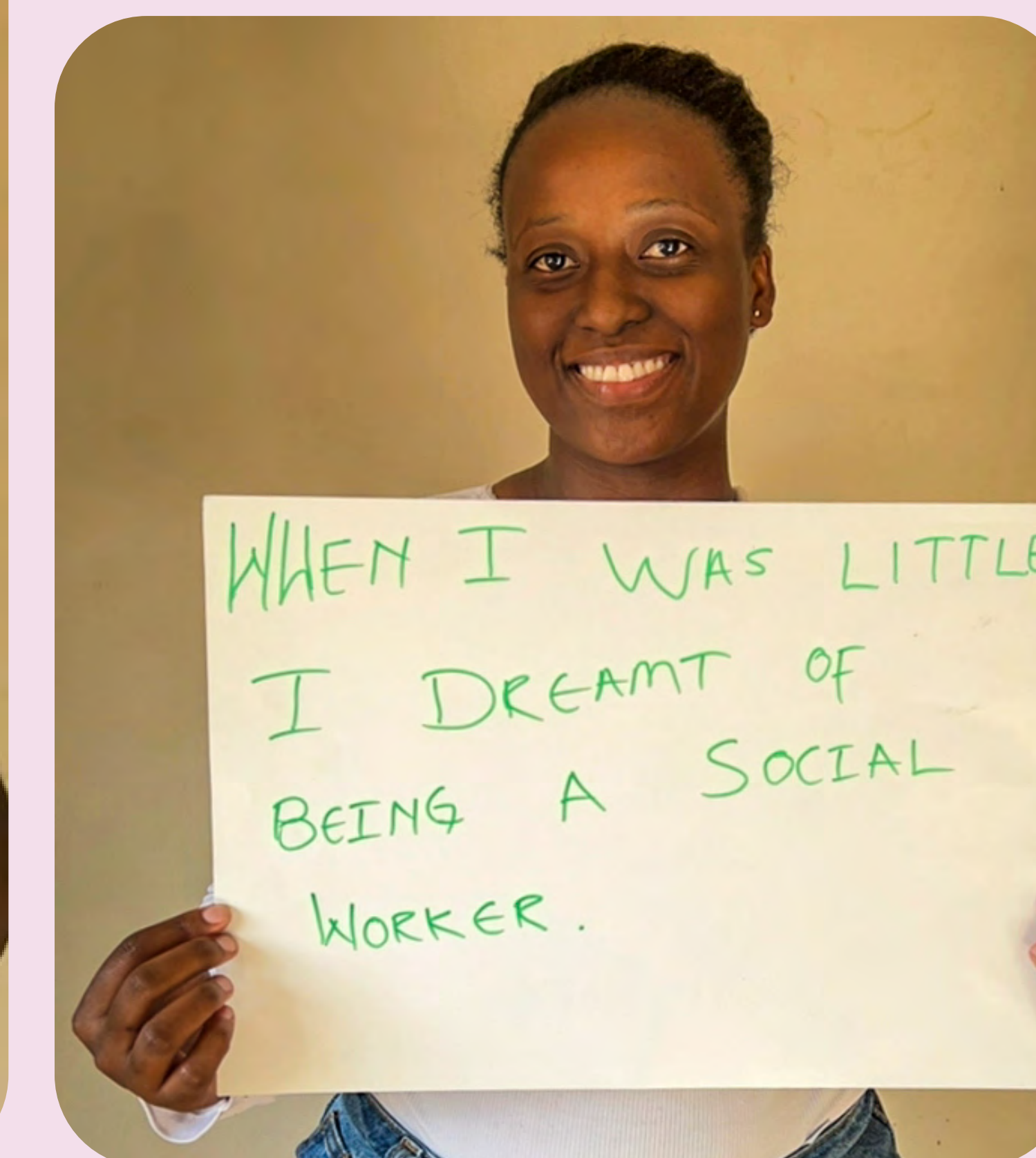


**An aspirational
Social Worker-
turned-Financial
Advisor**



Childhood Dreams

As a little girl, my dream was clear, **I wanted to be a social worker.** Inspired by personal experiences, I envisioned myself guiding others with the same compassion and empathy my own social worker had shown me.



Motherhood

Beautifully Challenging



**“Motherhood
is the greatest thing
and the hardest thing.”**

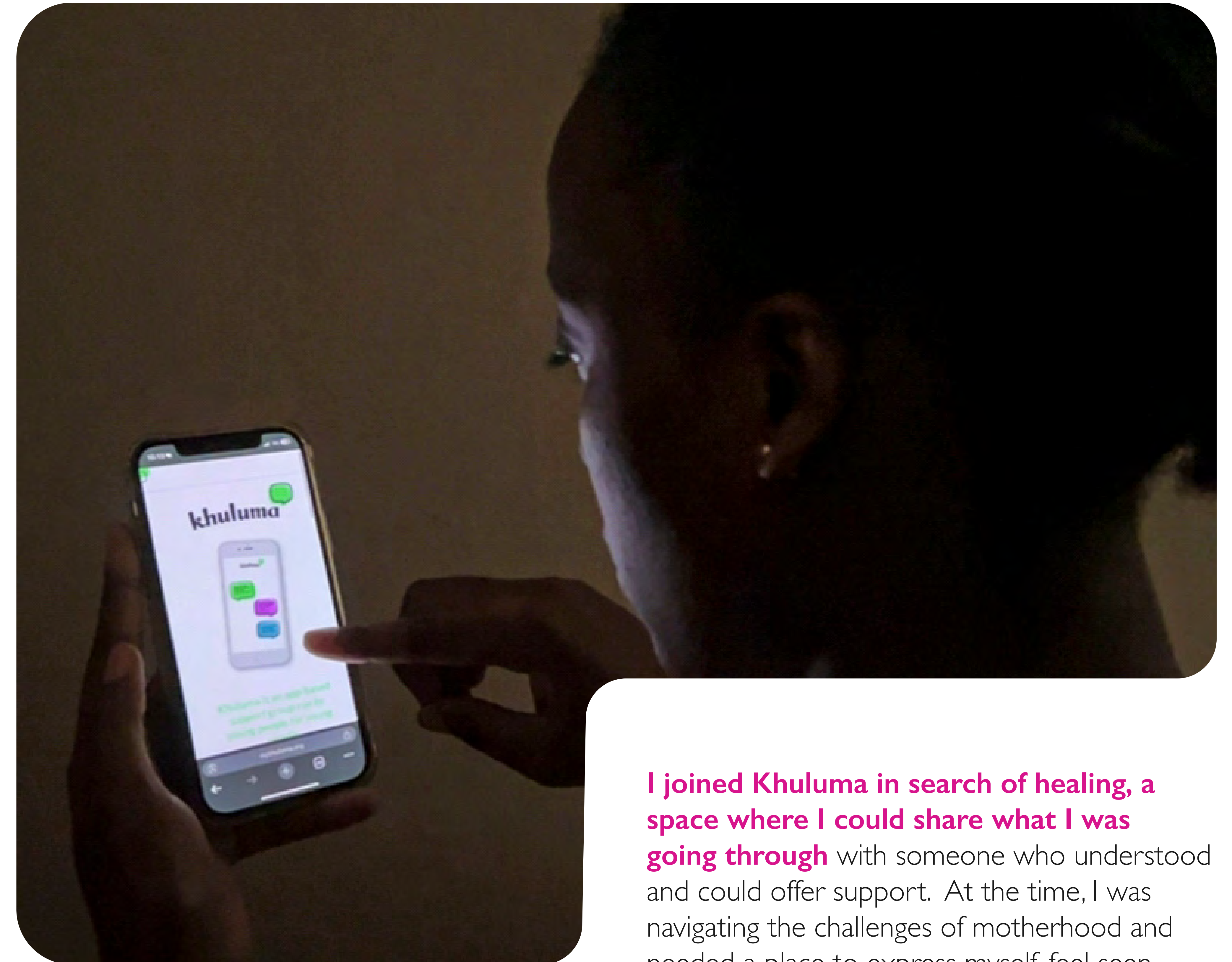
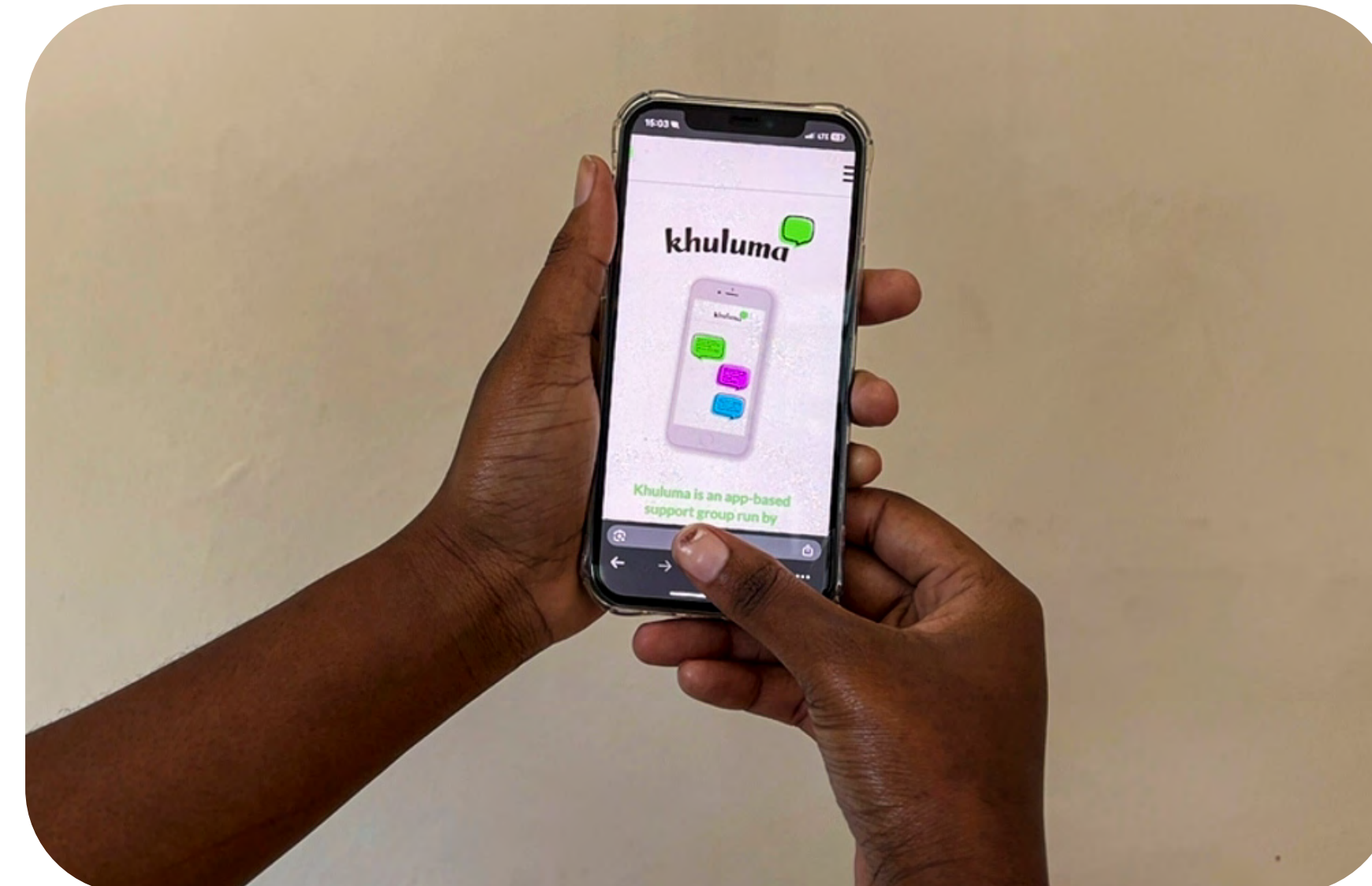
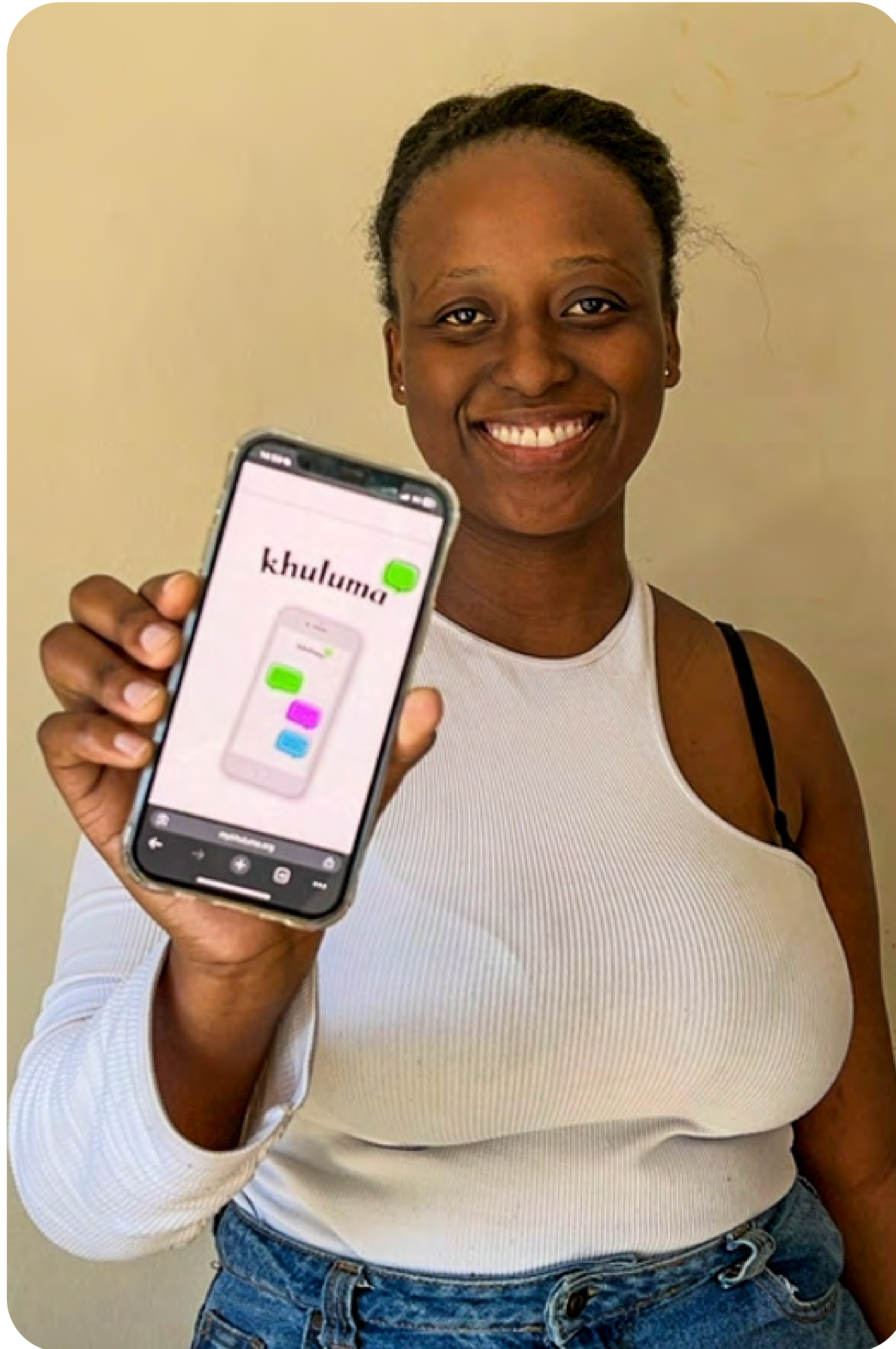
Ricki Lake

Being a young mother brought great joy but also significant challenges. Balancing school responsibilities with raising a child felt overwhelming at times. But **with the support of my family and friends, this journey became one of strength, beauty, and transformative moments** I'll forever cherish.



The Beginning

Finding Khuluma Support Groups

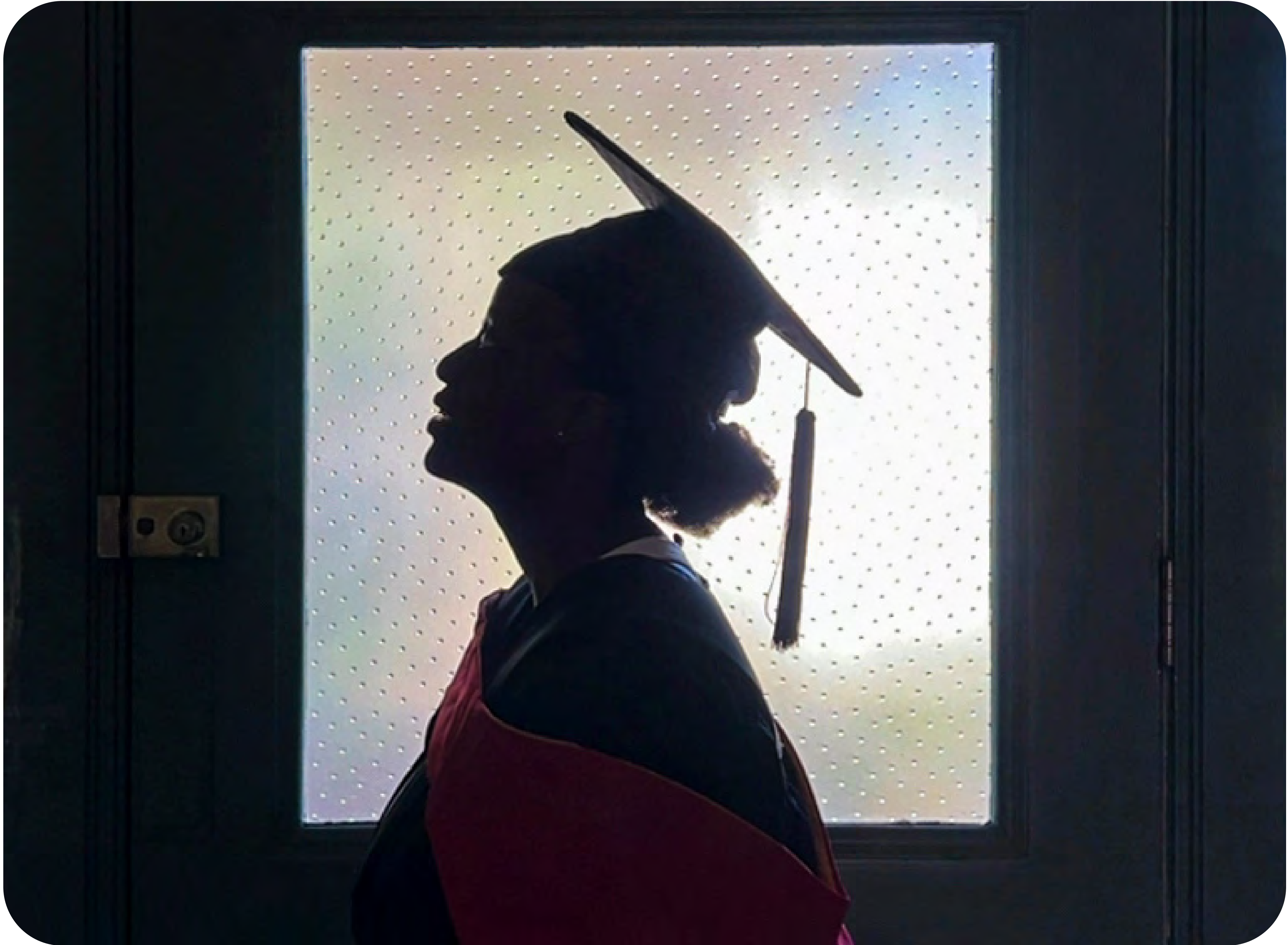


In 2021, I took a brave step towards healing and connection. **Joining Khuluma's support groups gave me a sense of belonging and safety.** After three months of meaningful conversations and encouraging feedback, I was invited to become a mentor, offering peer-to-peer support to others who had walked similar paths.

As a reserved person, initially it was difficult for me to engage with other mentors. But as I participated more deeply in the mentorship programme, **I felt my confidence and self-esteem boost.** My mental health improved, and I found myself building meaningful relationships.



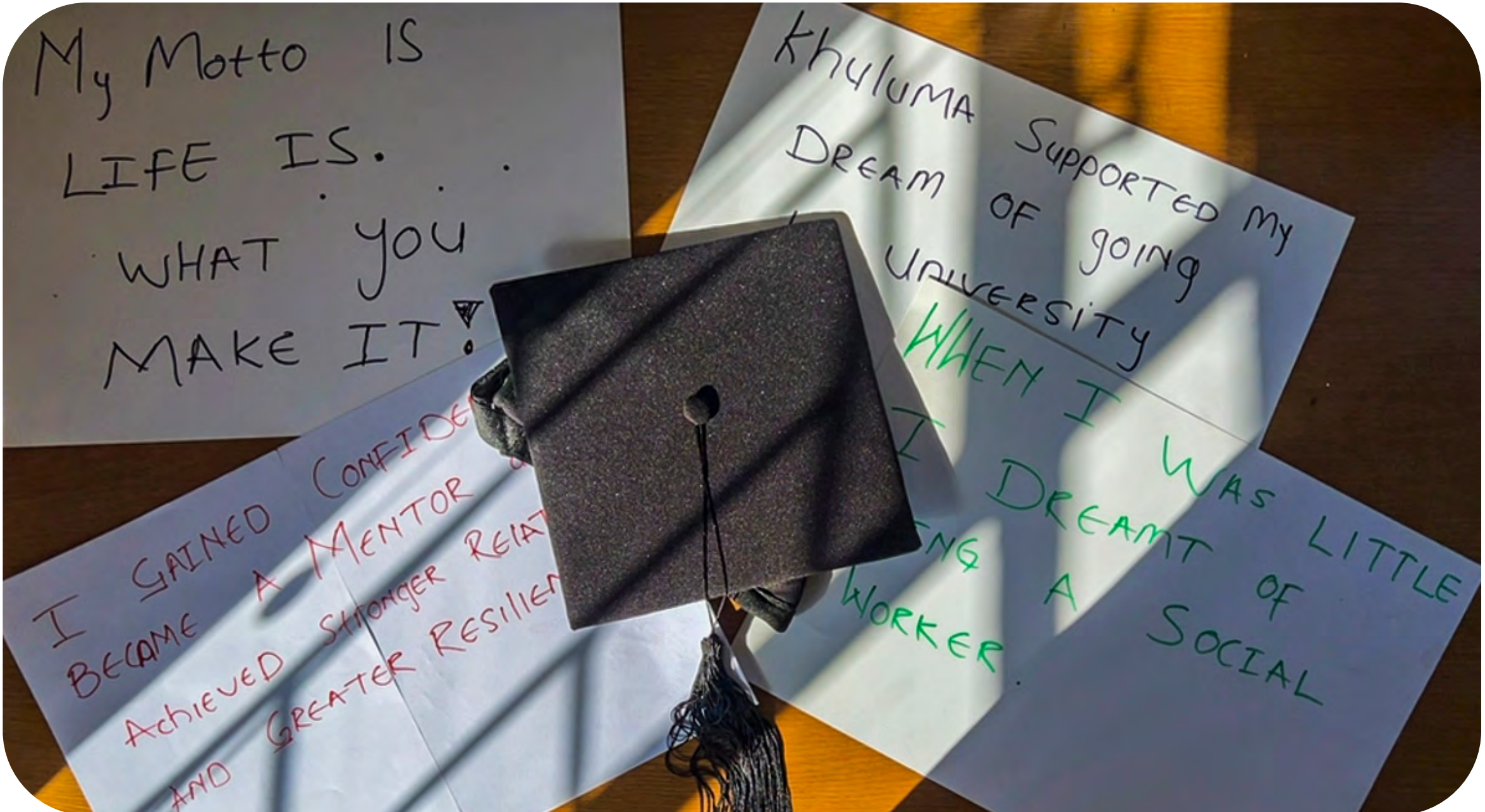
The Now Celebrating Academic Milestones



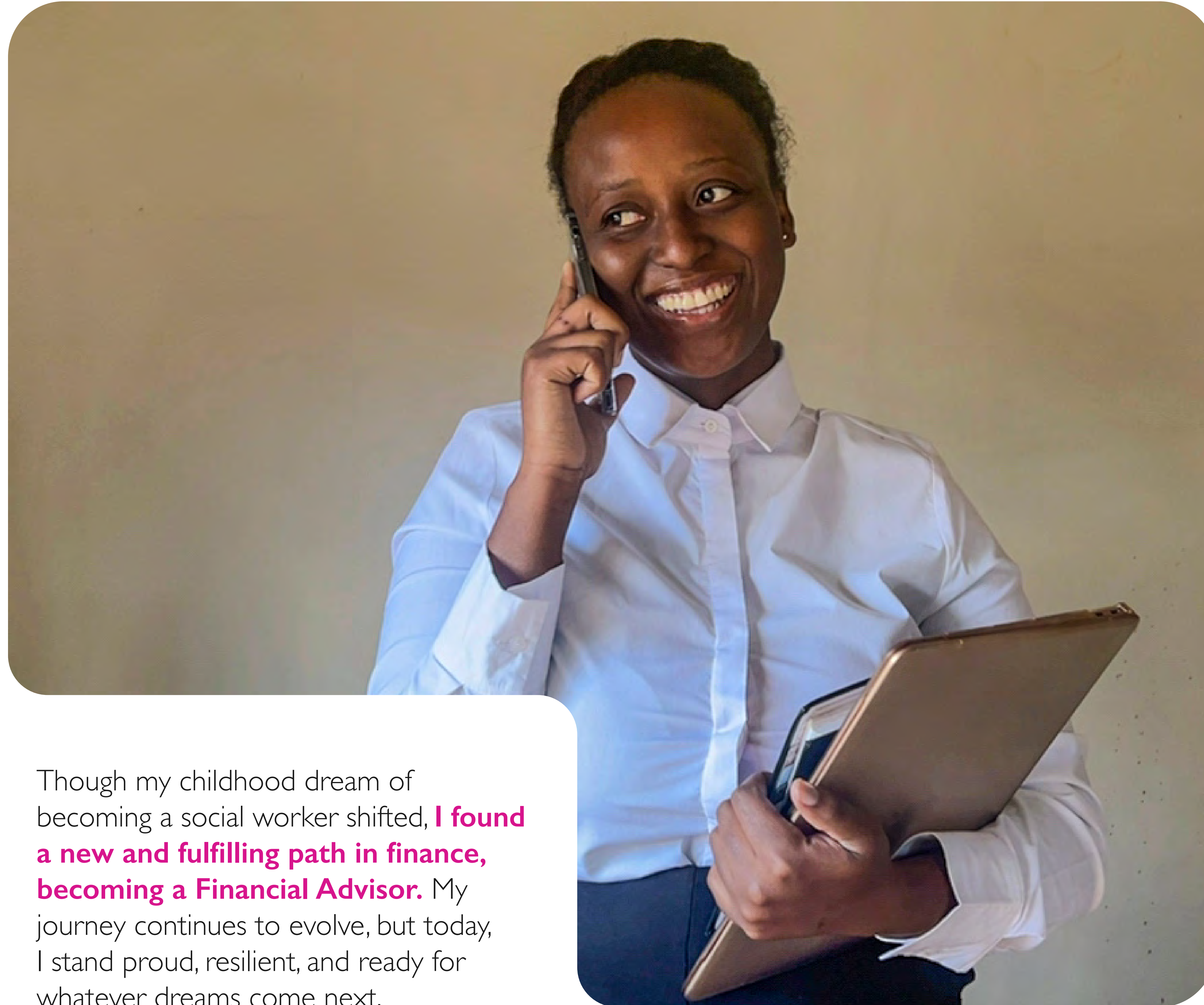
The day I graduated with a Bachelor's in Business Administration was my proudest moment.

Standing there, I thought to myself:
"I finally made it!"

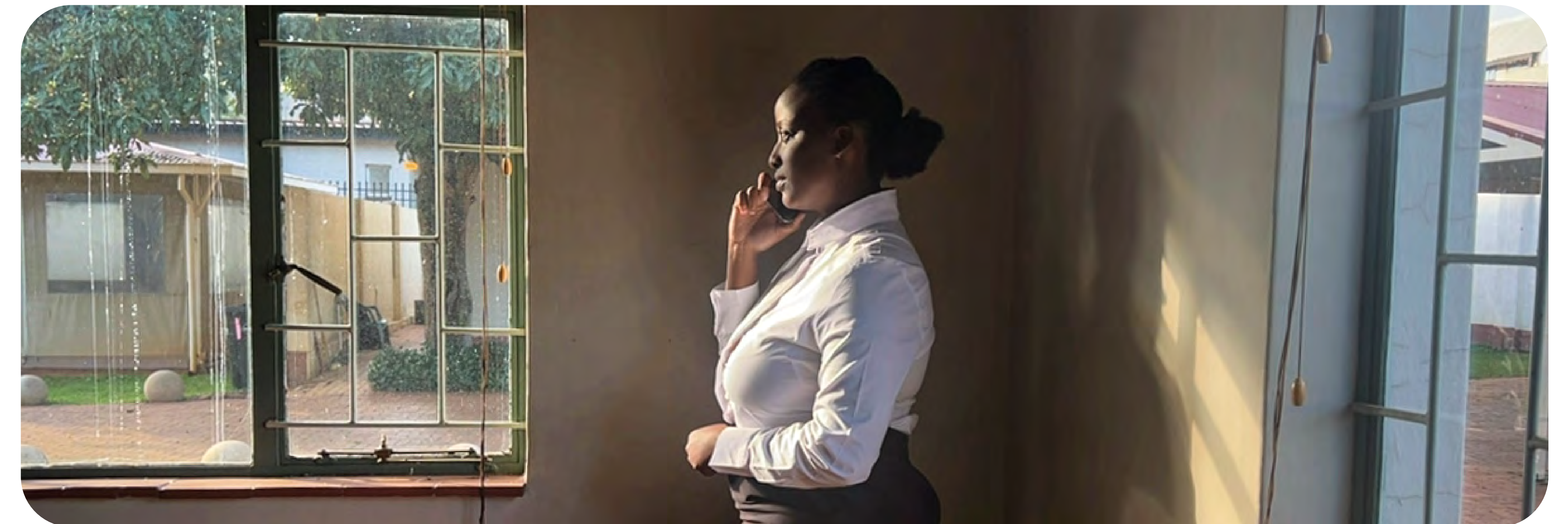
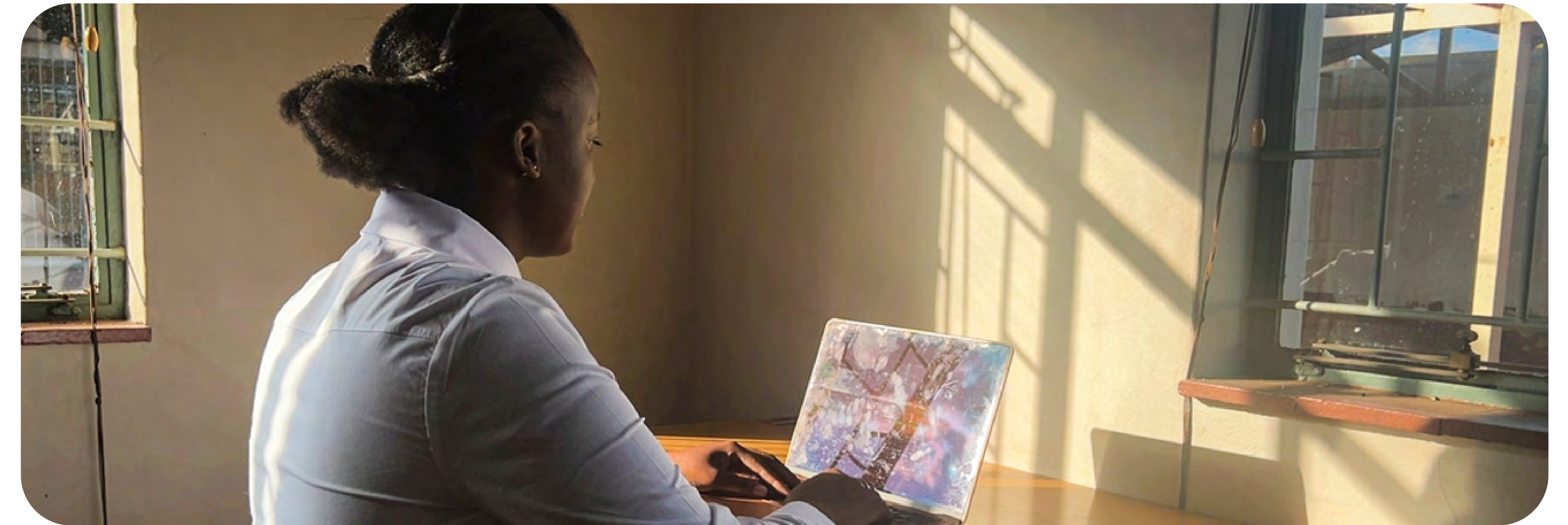
It wasn't just about earning a degree; it represented countless sleepless nights, new friendships, personal growth, and immense resilience.



Career



Though my childhood dream of becoming a social worker shifted, **I found a new and fulfilling path in finance, becoming a Financial Advisor.** My journey continues to evolve, but today, I stand proud, resilient, and ready for whatever dreams come next.



Rabi



An aspiring choreographer, studying to be an educator



Childhood Dreams



As a child, I was always curious and passionate about the arts. **I loved writing and was especially drawn to dance, with dreams of becoming a choreographer.**

My idols – Somizi, Jennifer Lopez, and Ciara – inspired me with their captivating performances and mastery of movement. Watching them dance made me want to express myself in the same way.

For me, dance is more than just a hobby, it's a form of freedom and self-expression. **When I'm dancing, I feel my true self**, unencumbered and fully alive.

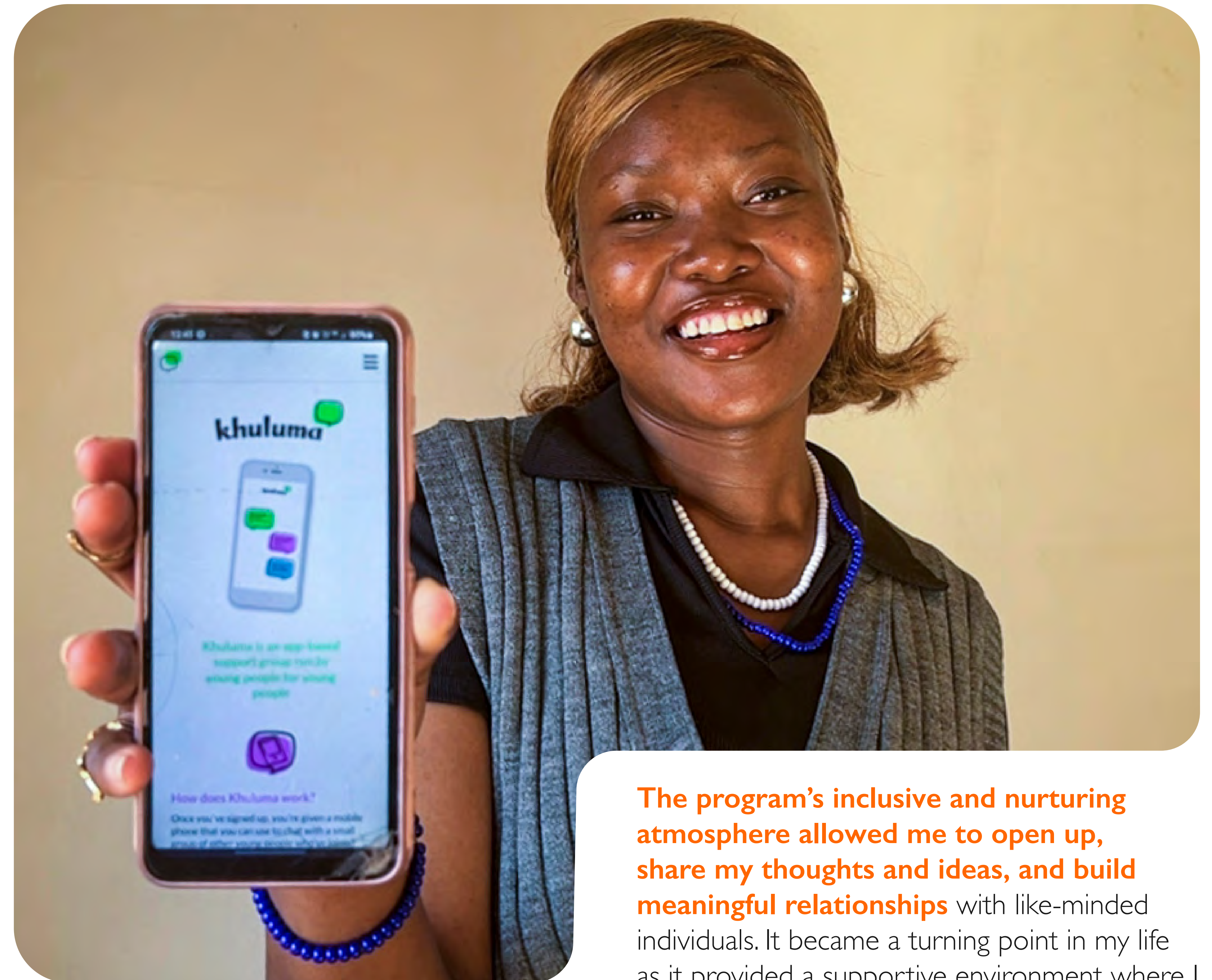
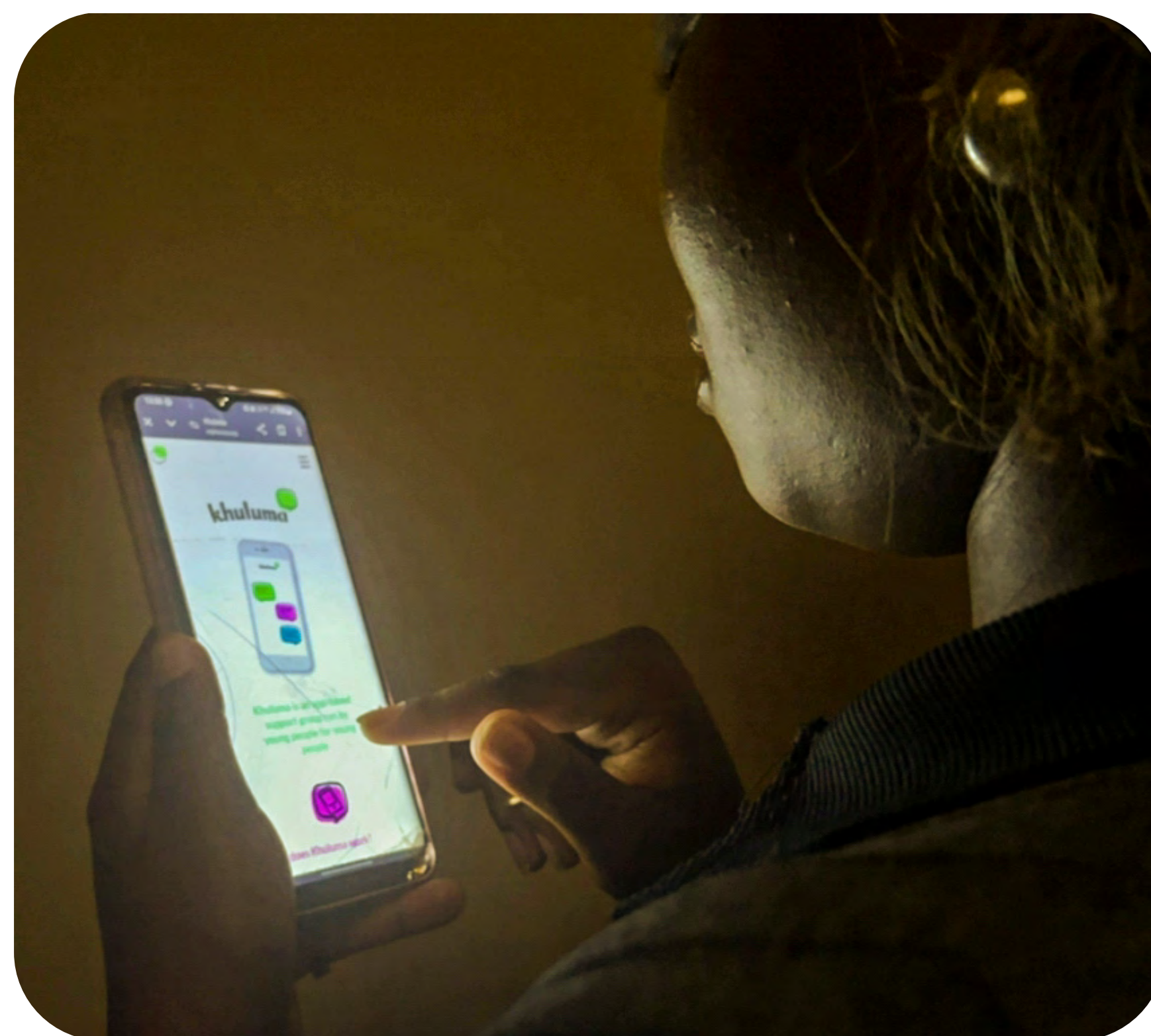
I love dancing in front of people I admire, as it makes the experience even more special. To this day, dancing remains a vital part of my life, and I often say:

“A day without dancing, is a day wasted”



The Beginning

Finding Khuluma Support Groups



In 2018, at the age of 14, **I joined the Khuluma mentorship programme, seeking a sense of belonging and connection** with peers who shared similar experiences. I was drawn to its promise of guidance, support, and camaraderie, which resonated deeply with my desire for growth, self-discovery, and empowerment.

The program's inclusive and nurturing atmosphere allowed me to open up, share my thoughts and ideas, and build meaningful relationships with like-minded individuals. It became a turning point in my life as it provided a supportive environment where I could grow, learn, and thrive – unlocking my potential and shaping my future in profound ways.

Through the Khuluma programme **I developed essential life skills, gained confidence, and discovered my passions**, setting me on a path toward achieving my goals and making a positive impact.



The Journey

Growing Through The Mentorship Programme

The programme helped me gain confidence, develop my advocacy skills, and discover my passion for social justice. **As I grew and learned, I began to understand the power of collective action and the importance of using my voice** to challenge systemic injustices.

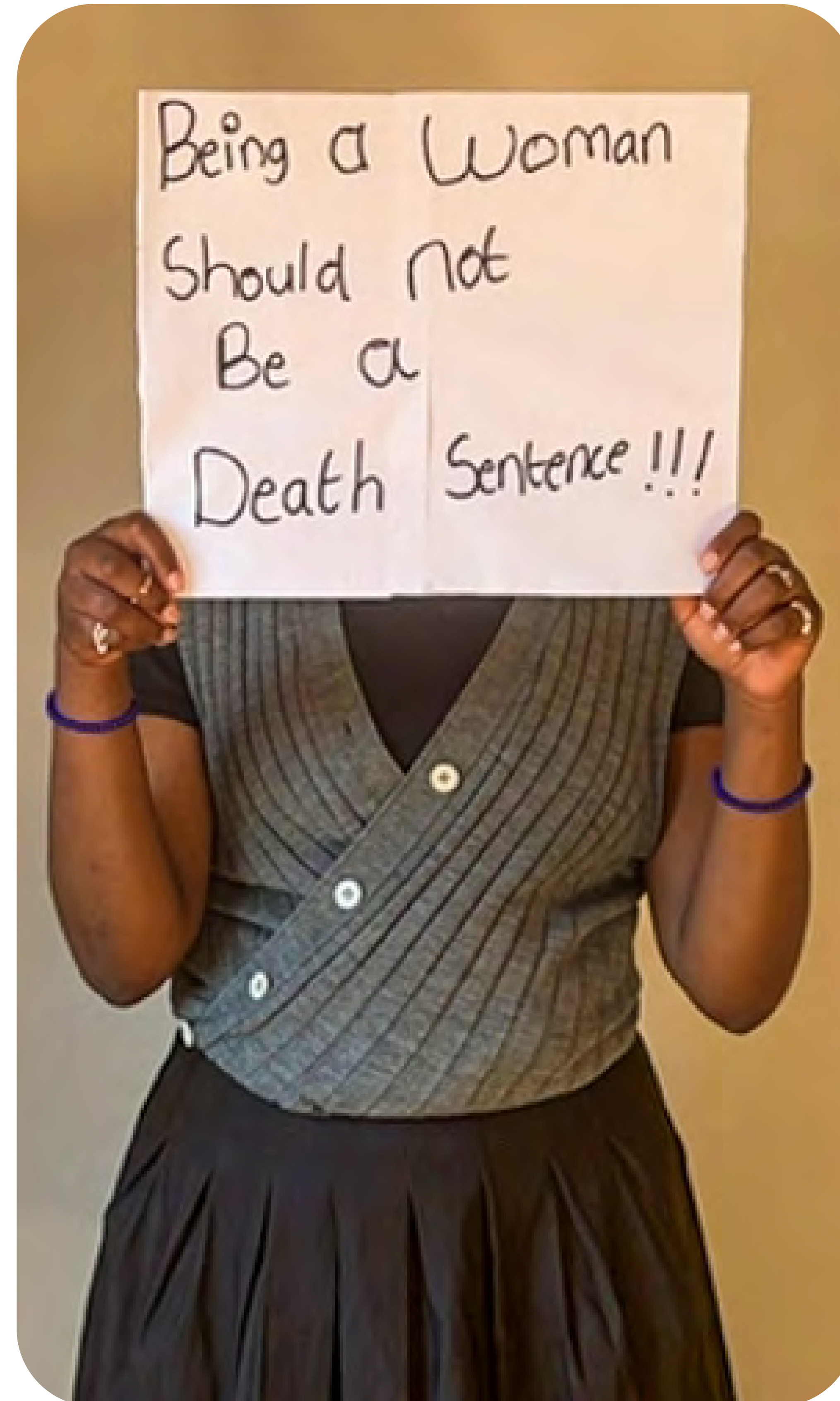
I'm reminded of the words of Malcolm X:



“If you’re not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing”

Malcolm X

This resonates deeply with me. I've come to realise that **true change requires us to question the status quo** and stand in solidarity with those fighting for their rights.



“Black Power means black people coming together to form a political fore”

Stokely Carmichael

Similarly, Stokely Carmichael's assertion inspired me to think critically about the role of community and collective action in achieving social justice.

Through this journey, I've become more committed to **using my skills and knowledge to advocate for a more just and equitable world.**



The Now Celebrating Academic Milestones

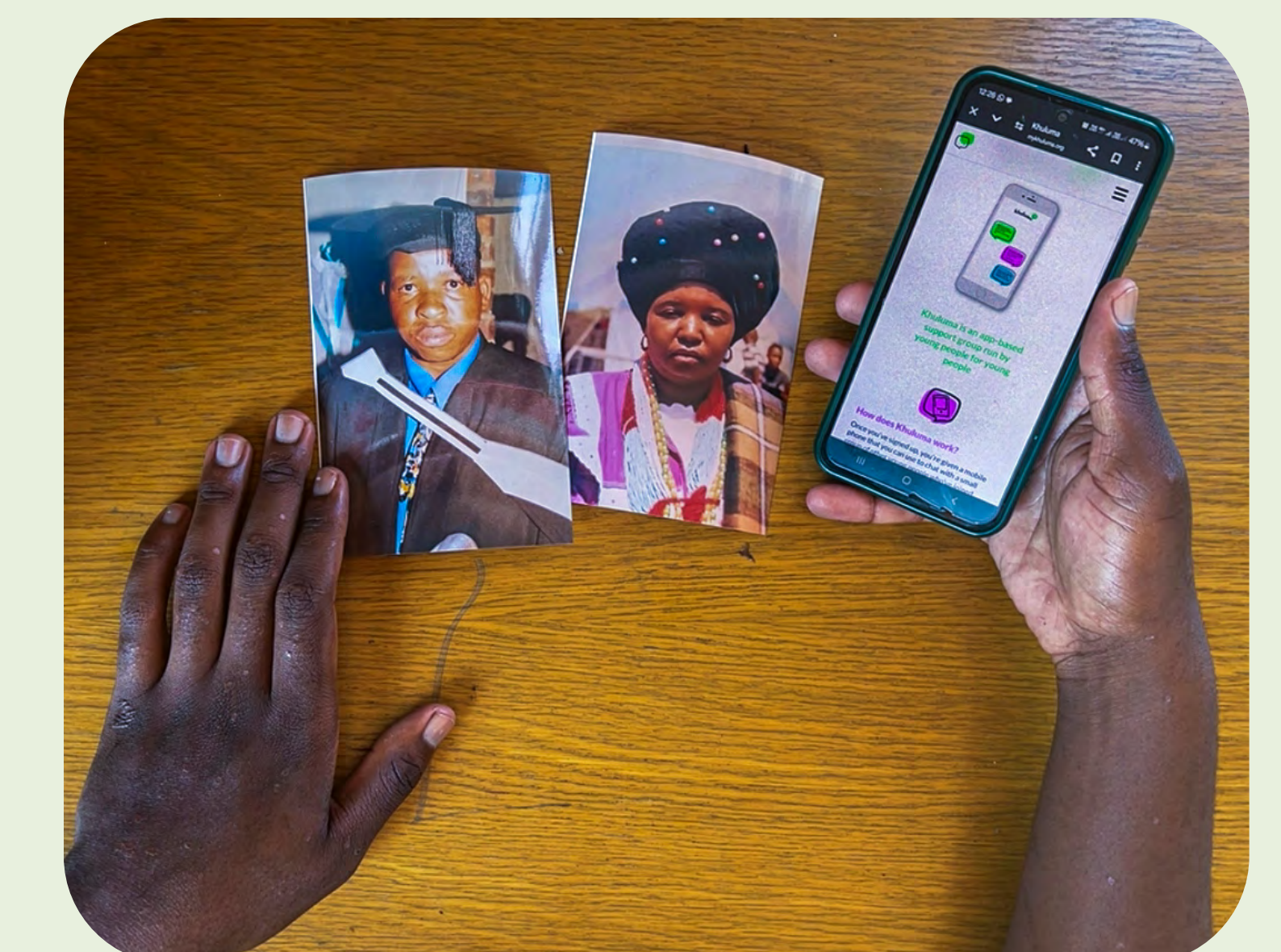
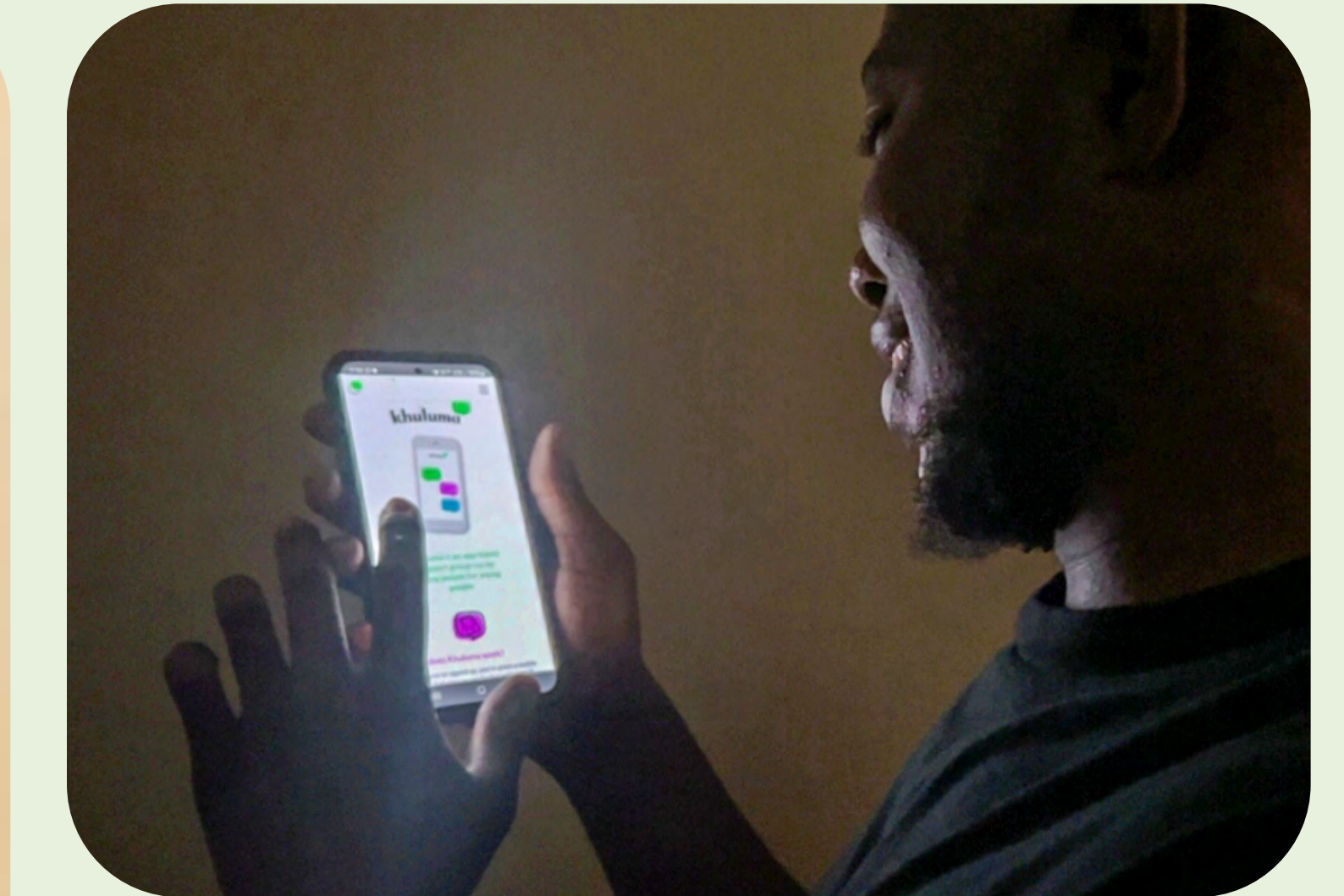
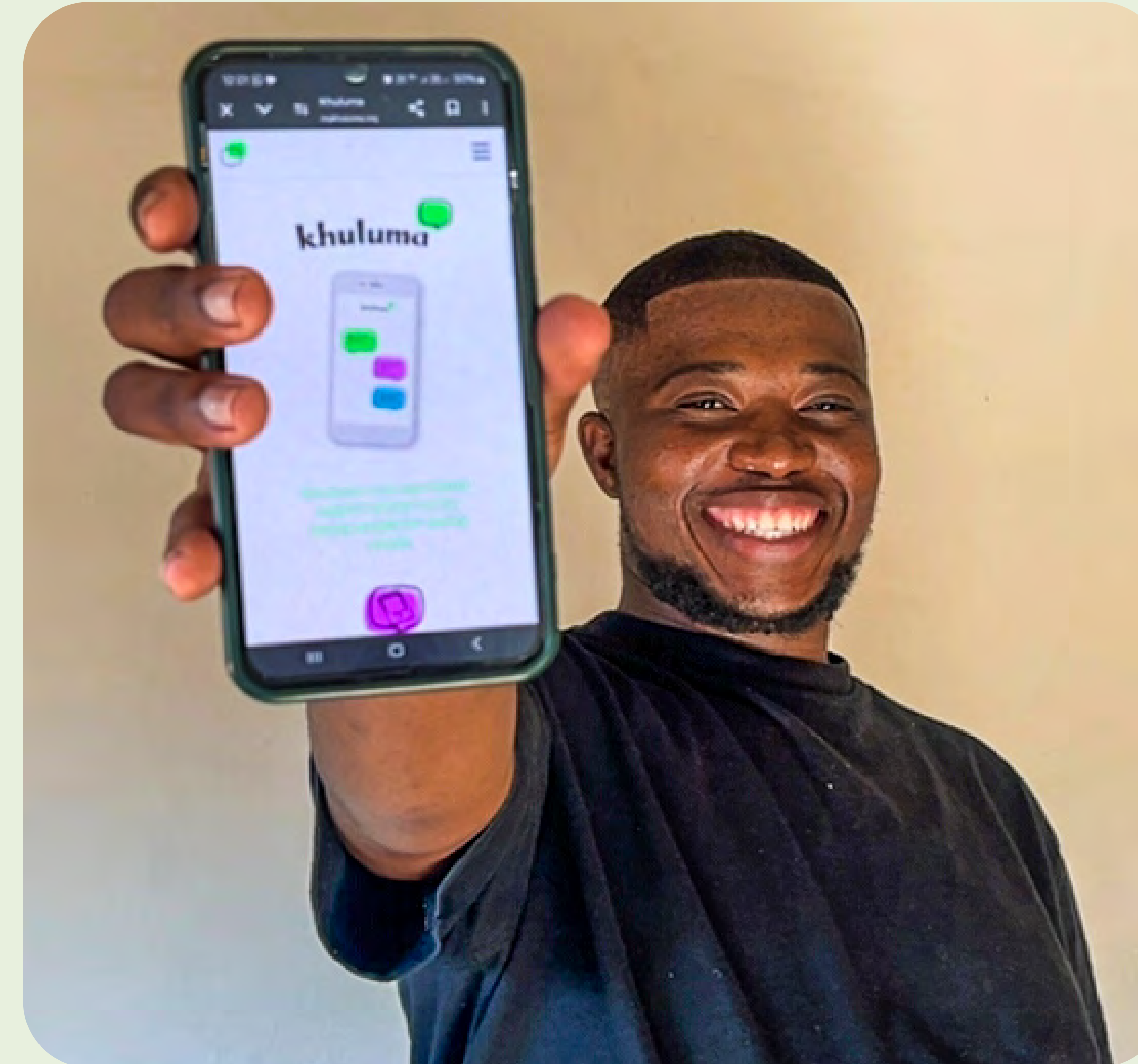


Through Khuluma, I received the support and guidance I needed to complete my matric in 2021. The programme's academic support and resources - including a brand-new laptop and residence registration fee - were instrumental in starting my university journey. I'm now studying Education, majoring in Consumer Studies for the Senior Phase and FET.

I'm grateful for the opportunities I've had and look forward to giving back to my community one day.



Grant



The Beginning Finding Khuluma Support Groups

When I was 13 years old, my mother joined Khuluma on my behalf. She told me we were going somewhere together, but I didn't know exactly where we were going until we arrived at a Khuluma support group session. She encouraged me to go in and talk to them.

As nervous as I was, I agreed. I introduced myself, spoke to the facilitators, filled in a questionnaire and just like that, I became part of Khuluma. That was back in 2013.



The Journey

Growing Through The Mentorship Programme



Through Khuluma's mentorship programme, **I found not only a support system but also a platform that empowered my voice.** Over the years, the programme helped me grow in confidence, resilience, and leadership. I began to understand the power of storytelling and advocacy, and how lived experiences could inspire change.



What started as participation evolved into activism.

I learned how to speak up for myself and others, and to stand up for student rights and the wellbeing of young people navigating similar challenges. **Khuluma taught me that activism isn't always loud—it can begin in small, courageous conversations that ripple into broader impact.**



Peer Support From Mentorship to Friendship



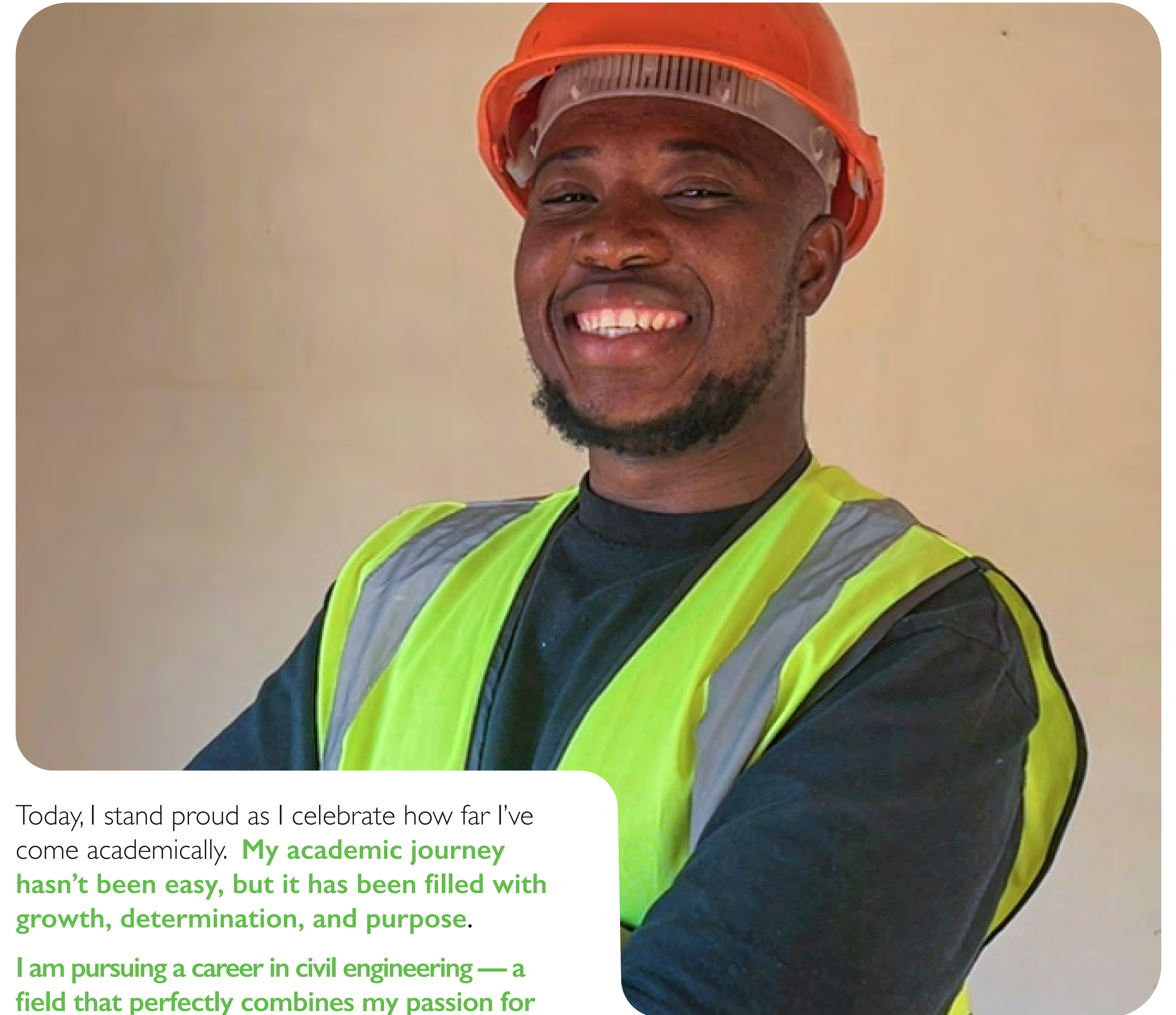
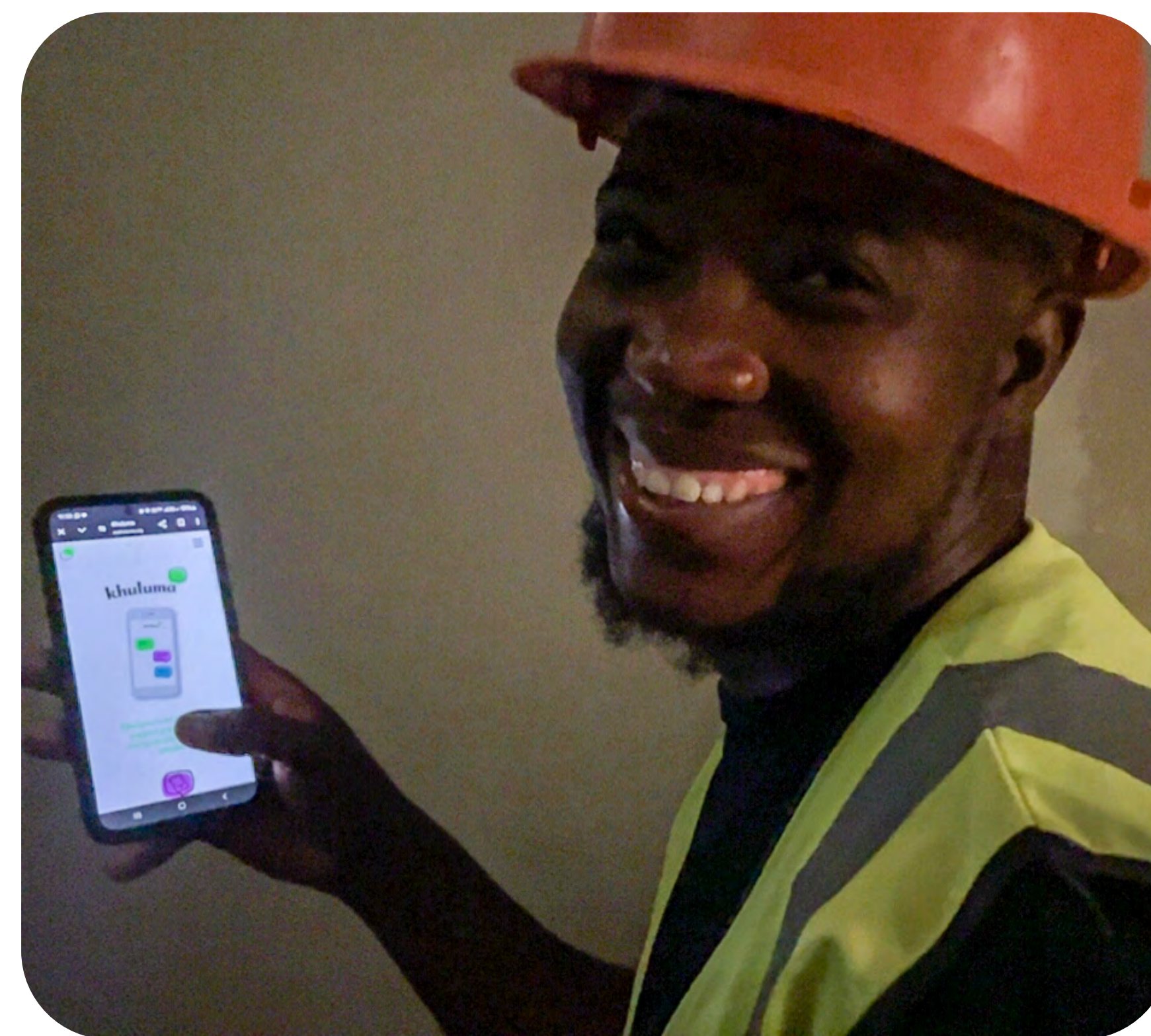
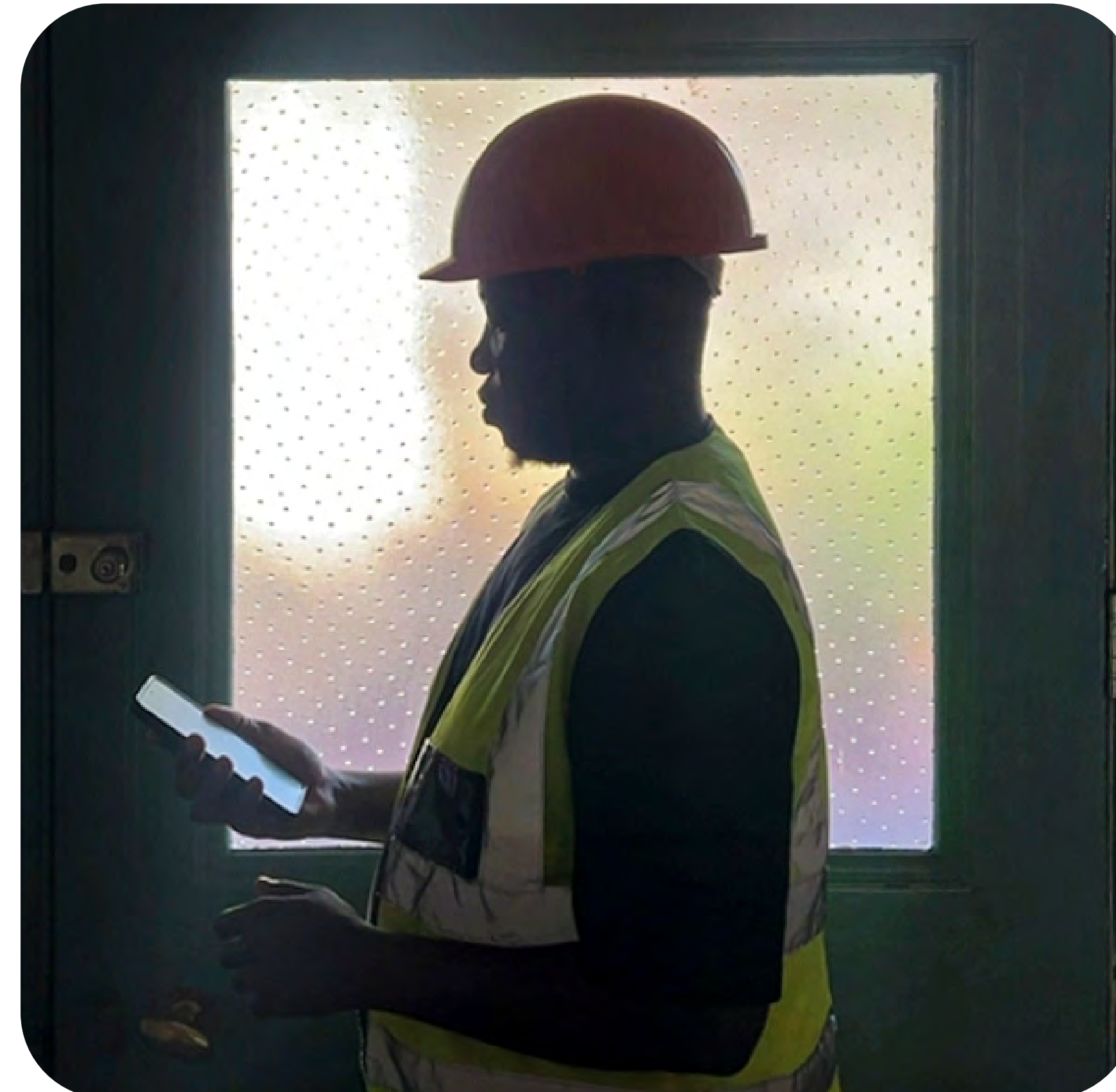
What began as mentorship through Khuluma gradually transformed into something deeper: true friendship. **Desmond and I became best friends after our trip to Zimbabwe.** The safe space created through Khuluma allowed us to connect on a human level, beyond roles or titles.

We became besties in healing, growth, and activism. **The friendships I formed through the programme have been some of the most meaningful in my life,** built on trust, shared experiences, and mutual encouragement.



The Now

Celebrating Academic Milestones



Today, I stand proud as I celebrate how far I've come academically. **My academic journey hasn't been easy, but it has been filled with growth, determination, and purpose.**

I am pursuing a career in civil engineering — a field that perfectly combines my passion for problem-solving with my desire to make a lasting impact.

Civil engineering isn't just about designing structures, it's about building communities, improving lives, and contributing to the development of a better, more sustainable future.

As I move forward, I carry with me everything I've learned—not just from textbooks, but from the experiences that have shaped my character. **This moment is not just a celebration of academic achievement, but of purpose, growth, and the exciting journey ahead.**



**Thank
You!**

Until more stories are written.

Images by
**elizabeth
dalziel**

