

TRIPLE JEOPARDY: Protecting At-Risk Refugee Survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1 – Khadija

“I am Somali. I am 51 years old. In Somalia, everyone used to **discriminate against me and my daughters on the basis of clan**. At that time, there was tribal fighting and my daughters were considered to be from the enemy clan because of my husband’s origin. I realized I cannot live peacefully with my kids. Finally, I had no choice: my husband was shot in Somalia due to his clan identity and I was badly injured and my arm was broken during the attack. I rushed with him and the children across the border and entered Kenya. I came with them to Dadaab camp.

I am alone now. I got pregnant with my youngest daughter born in Dadaab refugee camp. **My husband left me immediately after the birth** as he was not satisfied with the fact I provided him with his fourth daughter and no son!

People kept **mistreating my daughters** in Dadaab because of their father’s clan identity. They also accused me of being a **witch** and setting a curse on my husband’s family. Finally, one **day my youngest daughter sustained burn injuries in Dadaab when someone poured boiling oil and water on her back**. I decided to leave with my daughters for Nairobi. UNHCR gave me a document which I could use to access services at their organization in Nairobi. I received my mandate (Refugee Status) in Nairobi.

I don’t feel safe in Nairobi. It was three months ago when the operation against Somali refugees was at its climax and people were being taken to Kasarani stadium. Police came to my house at night and wanted to arrest my daughters and me. When I was defending my daughters, the **policeman threw me on the floor and I hurt my leg. The policeman asked me if there is any man in the house, and I told him we are alone. He then told me to undress and lay down on the mattress while he unzipped his trousers, ready to force me into having sex with him**. I resisted and he tore my dress. I screamed loud and the neighbors came to my rescue and they forced them to open the door. The policemen unlocked the door and my Somali neighbors entered my house. The neighbors paid them money and the policemen left the house.

My daughter is still in a shock. When my daughter sees a policeman she goes into a state of shock. She fears them. **The incident left my daughter traumatized**. We do not leave the house because we fear the police. I did not go to UNHCR or any NGO for help. **I am afraid the police would take revenge on us if I do. We are scared!**”

Case Study 2 – Nadine

Nadine is a 60-year-old asylum seeker from the DRC who arrived in South Africa three years ago. **She was gang raped and stabbed by men in uniform and civilian clothes** during an attack on her village in Eastern DRC. She was unconscious and neighbors brought her to a first aid clinic and she survived.

Nadine is married, but at this time, she doesn’t know where her husband is. She had three sons; the elder who was married, died from HIV/AIDS. So did his wife, and Nadine was left to take care of their

daughter. Her other two sons disappeared together with her husband. After being released from the clinic, **Nadine left with her granddaughter to go to South Africa.**

Since arriving in Johannesburg, they have stayed at a church. She feels she has no privacy and is fearful about leaving her grandchild alone to seek work. **She doesn't feel safe as there are a lot of gangsters in the neighborhood and they hate foreigners.**

She keeps thinking about the fate of her husband and sons and the future of her grandchild when she dies. She has high blood pressure. In the clinic, the woman counselor said, "If you stress too much, you will die and leave your child alone so you have to think about your child, you just have to accept what had happened to you and continue from there. It happens to many people from your country, you are not alone."

Her asylum submission was rejected because she didn't know she had an interview and missed the appointment. She was given an "appeal paper," but she cannot read English. Her counselor helped her fill in the form and wrote a letter to Home Affairs and she is waiting for their response to get refugee status. She cannot get assistance from organizations working with UNHCR until she is recognized as a refugee.

She knows how to clean, but when she goes to look for a job, she doesn't know if they find her too old to do the work or what, but up until now, she hasn't found a job. For money, she picks up those bottles of cold drinks and cans, and when she has a lot, she goes and sells them.

She said, "Last week, I stopped collecting cans. Two young men, gangsters, grabbed me in the street, seeing me collecting cans. They said this is their job and I should leave the area or they will kill me next time. I stopped for a week now, but I have no other choice but to return to collecting cans."

Case Study 3 – Bol

Bol is 40-year-old South Sudanese refugee living in Northern Uganda. He is married and has five children, all living in a settlement camp. **Bol lost his arm when he was caught in crossfire while fleeing South Sudan.**

After the first year in the settlement camp, Bol feels that his family situation is deteriorating. **He has been unable to get work and earn an income for his family.** Every time he **applies for a job in the settlement, the NGO staffers say that he can't do the job because of his arm.**

His wife is now working as a community outreach worker, which is helping the family financially. When his wife first started working, **Bol would try to do household chores, but he stopped because his friends would make fun of him for doing women's work.** Now he spends his day sitting and talking with the other men who also don't have jobs. Some of the other men have started looking for husbands for their young daughters, as they think this will reduce the burden on the family. Bol has started talking to his wife about this option for his eldest daughter, now 14 years old.

Bol and his wife are arguing more and more often about whether their daughters should get married and about money. **Bol wants to have all the money his wife earns and thinks that managing the money should be his job in the household.** His **wife's mother is also causing problems – she keeps saying that Bol is a "half man" who can't look after his family anymore.** Bol feels angry, frustrated and ashamed because he can't support his family like other men. The stress is also affecting the children – Bol was so angry the other day that he hit one of the youngest children for not helping around the house.

Bol says, “**I wish I could return to South Sudan, return to my land, my power, my duty.** I am a prisoner in my own family!”

Case Study 4 – Mariam

“I am a 59-year-old Masalit refugee from Darfur. It’s now 13 years that I am here. I fled Darfur because one day the **Janjaweed came at night and burned our village.** Two Janjaweed caught me and my children when we tried to escape. **They raped my eldest daughter and myself.** They left us there and I managed to cross the border with my children. My husband was away on business and from what I heard, he was killed when he came back to the village.

We managed to reach the camps across the border in Chad, but here people were talking about the fact that I was raped and so was my daughter. My sons were ashamed and left the camp and forgot about me.

I did not tell about my rape, but people know. I didn’t tell anyone, including anyone from the NGOs.

I am all alone with my daughter and her son. **I have a problem seeing. The left eye is not active so I only use the right one, and I can’t hear well. I also have a problem remembering.**

While in the camp, we received food for the first time; the second time after receiving the food, a refugee who is from my own village accused us of stealing this food. He was telling people to come with sticks and bash me because he was saying that I am a thief. I received food the third and the fourth time and then other men came and told me that someone told them that I was the one who was stealing people’s food. I told them that this is the food that I receive and also other people in my family.

After we had been in the camp for eight months, that man wrote a note and put it on a certain tree where people passed and **it said that I was a witch** and I eat people. Then people called me in the garden, saying, ‘You come and see -- there is a letter concerning you here.’ I thought maybe my husband had appeared. I was running, expecting something good, but when I reached there, it’s not what I saw. When I read the letter, it was saying that I am a witch and everyone who died in the camp, I was behind their death. Then that man sent two people with a match box and they burned my tent.

I was shaken. UNHCR moved us to another camp and the man was sent to prison. I am afraid that the man would seek revenge. **I don’t feel safe here.”**