

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

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1 - 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 staff 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 2 – Khadija

Khadija is 27-year-old refugee from Somalia. She experienced polio during childhood and uses crutches to move around. **Her parents married her at the age of 15 to an old man.** She got pregnant soon after, but the child died at birth.

When al-Shabab attacked her village, **her husband disappeared and she found herself** with other two Somali women making their way at night towards the Kenyan border. The **women were kind to her and helped her along the way.** She cannot forget that.

One night, near the border, soldiers captured them; the other two women managed to flee, but Khadija could not. The soldiers **raped her and left her wounded.** The **two women returned and found her** and brought her across the border to Dadaab camp where she was hospitalized and later recovered.

After a few years in Dadaab living with two friends, she got the news that her brother was alive and living in Germany. Thanks **to UNHCR she was resettled in Hamburg, Germany** and now lives with her brother, sister-in-law and their three young children.

She took German lessons and her brother has treated her very well. She received **treatment for fistula and her medical problems have been resolved.**

After a few years, her brother went to visit Somalia. After he came back, his behavior changed. He became **more religious and strict, and forbade Khadija from leaving the house without a male companion.** Khadija wants to **study and have an independent life, but he has forbidden it. She does all the household chores and wants to have a family one day. Her brother said she is still married, although her husband disappeared** years ago. “He says no one would marry me with my leg and my history anyway,” says Khadija. At times she thinks of running away and going back to her friends in Dadaab, but it is so far and she is alone with no one to assist her.

Case Study 3 – Pauline

Pauline is a 33-year-old Burundian refugee living in Nairobi. She survived the inter-ethnic violence in her home country, and saw her parents killed. As a result of these traumatic events, she now experiences **episodes of confusion.**

She lives with her aunt, who took her to the hospital during her first attack. The hospital gave Pauline medication which she has taken ever since, however, sometimes the attacks come back, especially when she thinks she feels good and becomes lax about taking her medication.

Pauline is grateful for all the help her aunt provides and wants to contribute by working. **However, the Burundian community has shunned her, viewing her as a witch and bringing bad luck to those who come close to her.** Kenyans don’t want to employ her as she has no special skills and they prefer their own people.

“People are afraid of me. They stare at me when I walk in the street. They claim I am obsessed with dead spirits. They talk behind my back.”

There are two men, however, who have not shunned Pauline like the others. They know that she has no money and that she wants to help her aunt as much as possible. **They wait till Pauline has an attack, and then successfully convince her to exchange sex for food and money.**

Pauline’s aunt did not know where Pauline was getting this money, so she took her to a local women’s NGO where she could talk to a counselor. After a few sessions, **Pauline was integrated into an income-generating support group run by the NGO.** She went there twice a week, making jewelry from beads and scrap materials, which the group sells to tourists. She was happy there.

One night, returning home from the NGO office, Pauline was attacked **by a group of four fellow refugee women.** “They cursed me and threw some liquid on me. I don’t go to the NGO activities anymore. I am scared.”

Since then, her situation has deteriorated and she is sad and has no energy to continue.

Case Study 4 - Josephine

Josephine is 18 years old. She fled the Democratic Republic of Congo with her mother and younger sister Mary after their village was attacked by rebels. Her father and two older brothers were killed in that attack. **Josephine has an intellectual disability.** In the Congo her family was stable and secure, and **Josephine was taken care of by the family**, but **she didn't go to school or have any friends outside the family.**

When they fled to Uganda, Josephine's situation deteriorated. Her mother, who used to take care of the household in Congo, found a job as a cleaner in a faraway neighborhood. **Mary was left to take care of Josephine, but she would very much like to go to school like all the other girls in the neighborhood.**

"Josephine is good at heart," her Mother says, "but she is sometimes difficult to control. I love her, but at times she is a burden on us and her sister who pays the price of not going to school."

A few months before, the family discovered that Josephine was pregnant. **Her sister said that a 42-year-old male neighbor used to frequent their house during lunch time and give them food.** He would let Mary go across to his house and **watch her favorite show on TV and said he would take care of Josephine.** "That is ok," he would say, "but don't say anything to your mother."

Josephine's mother explains, "I immediately left the neighborhood and am now staying with a friend from Congo. **Everybody is saying both my daughters are prostitutes.** We are **mocked and ridiculed and I seldom go out of the house now.** I left my work and cannot leave my daughters alone. I feel so guilty. I went to one NGO and asked for help. They gave me an emergency three months of financial assistance, but said they are not sure this was rape, as rumors say Josephine had asked for it."

"I don't know what to do," says Josephine's mother. "I cannot take on the shame. We are cursed! My daughters and I are **shunned by the community.** No one will speak to us. They think I sold my daughters for money."