

Lona's Story

Forced migration

My name is Lona. I am an orphan of Sudanese nationality. Both of my parents were killed in the 21-year civil war which came to a halt in January 2005. I have not heard of any relations of mine but I believe there must be someone somewhere. The only ones I knew of vanished with history. My family was not ranked with high class members but we owned some land, a few cows and never missed something to put on the table. Gone are those days.

Civil War in Sudan

I longed to be myself again. I had given up in life. I stopped dreaming of whom I wanted to be when I grew up. The future was as black as coal. Nothing mattered and I thought if there was a time I wanted to die, it was that day I sat with an empty stomach under the tree. I longed and prayed to die though I doubted whether there was a God; I mean, an all loving God. As I was lost in thoughts, suddenly I heard a big sound. There was no mistaking the sound; they were bombing our small village!



Sudanese militia

My parents were shot dead; my uncle was tortured to death. Since I was the first child of my parents, I did not have sisters and brothers. I ran from the camp; we were only a few meters from the shooting point. I felt petrified. I hid in the bush nearby. Apparently every one seemed to be running helter-skelter. Tears rolled down my cheeks. I wanted to run as fast as an ostrich but my legs got stuck and rooted to the ground.

I will never forget the scene I saw an hour later. From East to West the ground was littered with dead bodies. I managed to skip and jump to a world of the unknown. If it had been the Old Testament, I would have competed with Abraham who decided to leave all in search of the unknown place. I cannot remember how many miles I trekked but I reached camp at which I was registered. Life was so difficult in the camps, as I moved from one to the other.

Security in a Refugee camp in Kenya

After what seemed an eternity, I was in the Kenyan camp for refugees called Kakuma. I went through the usual procedures of registration. With no one to relate to, I felt so lonely. But many were suffering too. The only thing which grieved me was that I could not be a sister to someone.

Soon, I got a chance to attend classes in Nairobi, the capital city in Kenya. Having no basic foundation in learning, I had difficulty in catching up with the teachings. However, our teacher gave me extra coaching and with time I was progressing rapidly.



Refugee camp



East Africa

Training opportunities in the camp

One day, good news came. There was an NGO who was offering some technical on-job training. I enrolled for tailoring courses. I was good at hand work and I was soon employed by the NGO in an income generating activity.



Tailoring stall

After a few years of operation, the NGO closed down due to insufficient donor funding. However, I managed to open a stall where I sew clothes for both men and women. I am basically known for embroidered African attires. I sell lots of clothes and make enough to save a good percentage.

With the recent peace agreement signed early this year, I long and yearn to go home to Sudan. I want to design clothes for my fellow Sudanese. I wonder what ruins remained of the village I shared with my *Mama and Baba*. Whatever happened to those dead bodies that lied motionless forever haunts. I wonder how many lived to tell their past stories. As much as the memories hurt, I want to go back home. I have heard rumours for a long time and stories through the media. We Sudanese have lost a lot and we need to go back and re-start afresh.

Support and Funding for Re-building Independence in Sudan

'*One tree is not a forest*' they say. With one hand, the Sudanese cannot do these things themselves. We need the help of almost everyone to lend a hand. The international community can help by funding programs. The neighboring countries can offer expertise at a cheaper price. Others might consider praying for things to move the best ways. In my culture we say, '*one fingernail cannot kill a louse*'. One needs two hands to kill it however tiny it is. We need to kill many tiny and huge things ranging from tribal conflicts, hunger, illiteracy, and blood-shedding, just to mention but a few.

Wanting to go back Home

Although I live a good life in Kenya, renting a good house and surrounded by caring friends, I feel deep down in my heart that I would feel much better in Sudan. I am still holding on and hoping that one day I will be on my way back home; never to feel home-sick again.

Life-line:

- ❖ Forced migration because of the civil war
- ❖ Security and education in the refugee camp in Kenya
- ❖ Training with NGO in tailoring in the camp
- ❖ Market stall, embroidering clothes
- ❖ Plea for further help from International Organisations to nurture independence and self sufficiency for Sudan, to fund programmes
- ❖ Wanting to go back home

Web links for further information:

BBC Country Profiles: Sudan

A brief history and key statistics:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/country_profiles/820864.stm

BBC In depth feature on Sudan: a Nation divided

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/africa/2004/sudan/default.stm

BBC News World Edition

Top news stories from across Africa <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/default.stm>

BBC Case Study of Emmanuel Jal, Sudanese former child soldier turned chart-topping rap star in Kenya and a passionate advocate of peace

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/music/4277923.stm>

All Africa

A site offering news from over one hundred newspapers and news agencies across Africa.

Sudan pages:

<http://allafrica.com/sudan/>

One World Africa

The African arm of the One World independent media network; a network of people and groups working for human rights and sustainable development.

<http://africa.oneworld.net/article/frontpage/151/509>

Refugee Council

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk>

Human Rights Watch

www.hrw.org/refugees

Sudan profile: <http://hrw.org/doc/?t=africa&c=sudan>

UNDP Human Development Reports

Human development indicators, searchable by country or indicators.

<http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/>