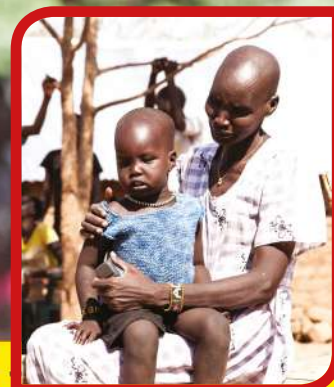


THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR WOMEN SPECIAL EDITION Refugee Magazine

Kakuma Ed
ISSUE #5



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KAKUMA MARKS
IWD 2015

+++ PLUS

56 YEAR OLD
MOTHER
OF 51



@TheRefugeeMag

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Ukech Daniel
Issue 5 Editor

Ukech is also a Community Journalism Student at FilmAid International

A new year brings with it new hope, new excitement and new sense of belonging. We thank you for reading our magazine throughout last year and hope that you will keep on reading it this year too. Last year was a great year. We produced 4 editions of the Refugee Magazine, and I am more than happy to let you know that they were all a success. All this could not have been possible without you, the reader.

In our last edition on the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, we focused on early marriage. We produced 6,000 copies, which were distributed across the camp here in Kakuma, and a few more copies were also distributed at the Dadaab Refugee Camp. Our online edition of the same was shared more than 11,000 times across our social media platforms and especially through our twitter handle @therefugeemag. We have received numerous comments from readers expressing their utmost desire to put an end to early marriages.

Our first Edition this year is a special edition focusing on extraordinary women who have gone through great lengths to better their lives as well as the lives of those around them. Our cover page this month features the story of Aol, a 56-year old mother of 51, as she shares the everyday challenges she faces raising more than 50 children, 9 of whom are her biological children. We also share Ninwa's story, a mother and a student at a primary school in Kakuma, as she pursues her goals through resilience and determination to live a successful life tomorrow.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to welcome our new pool of writers. Our writers, 15 men and women, are currently going through Community Journalism Training conducted by FilmAid. As they say 'an old broom sweeps better,' our previous students are playing an instrumental role in guiding our new writers to ensure that you get your copies of The Refugee Magazine this year.





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- UKECH DANIEL UBOA
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PHOTOS: Congolese women perform during the IWD at Napata Grounds. RIGHT South Sudanese women group performs a traditional dance. RIGHT BELOW UNHCR Field Officer, Fortunata, addresses women at Napata Grounds

By O. Samuel / FilmAid

KAKUMA MARKS THE

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR WOMEN

POMP AND COLOUR AS PERFORMANCES AND SPEAKERS CALL FOR MORE EQUALITY.

BY SALADI OSMAN

This is a vital year for advancing the cause of women's human rights...The world will never realize 100 per cent of its goals if 50 per cent of its people cannot realize their full potential. When we unleash the power of women, we can secure the future for all.

Ban Ki-moon

All around the world, International Women's Day represents an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of women while calling for greater equality.

Each year International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated on March 8. The first International Women's Day was held in 1911. Thousands of events occur to mark the economic, political and social achievements of women. Organisations, governments, charities, educational institutions, women's groups, corporations and the media celebrate the day.

This year, the IWD celebrations were marked at Napata Grounds, Kakuma. The celebrations that were spearheaded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in collaboration with the International Rescue Committee (IRC)

and FilmAid International among other implementing partners saw hundreds of people gather to celebrate the achievements that have so far been made by women and to call for more equality. The event started off with a procession that saw both men and women participate in large numbers before heading to Napata Grounds for the culmination of the event.

The call for women to make it happen and call for more equality took precedence during the event as speaker after speaker, performance after performance echoed the theme for the day. The UNHCR Field Officer, Fortunata Nyongani called for more gender equality during her speech. She also challenged the present agencies to give more job opportunities to women. The government of Kenya was not left behind during the occasion. The Government Representative for the



THE STRENGTH OF A WOMAN

BY UKECH DANIEL

I believe that a revolution is taking place to change the world's negative perception about women. Traditional African society places a woman in a demeaning position compared to that of a man and mostly refers to women as a source of wealth, if not material for marriage.

Such heartless statements and many others are usually used to describe the dark side of a woman. It is believed that many are innately negative on issues concerning women but what most of us, African men, tend to forget about are all the wonderful things about women.

The power of womanhood is unexceptionally strong, but is always taken for granted. Take for instance your mother carried you in her womb for nine months without complaining, yet very few of us take time to think of her. I believe no man, however strong, can ever bare the burden of pregnancy not even for a month.

Women are also good decision makers. Their assessment of family situation is astonishing when it comes to challenges.

There are a lot of women who made it to the top despite the challenges they have faced. They include women like Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who was the first African Female elected head of state, Wangari Maathai the first Kenyan female to receive a Nobel Peace Prize, and Lupita Nyong'o a Kenyan actress and film maker just to mention but a few.

These women and many others have managed to go against all odds and change history by being strong, brave, and human regardless of the society's expectations of them. I believe women deserve better and their strengths should be acknowledged.

occasion Mr. Daniel Ongoro gave a stern warning to those who are engaged in early marriages pointing out that they will face the full force of the law. He also urged parents to educate their female children.

Among the key performances, was Queen Lisa, a young talented artist nurtured by FilmAid International through FilmAid's Art and Theatre programme, with a touching song dedicated to women. Other performances included Congolese Women Group, Burundian Girls, and South Sudanese Women dance group.

International Women's Day is celebrated in many countries around the world. It is a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political. It is an occasion for looking back on past struggles and accomplishments, and more importantly, for looking ahead to the untapped potential and opportunities that await future generations of women.

In 1975, during International Women's Year, the United Nations began celebrating International Women's Day on 8 March. Two years later, in December 1977, the General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming a United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace to be observed on any day of the year by Member States, in accordance with their historical and national traditions. In adopting its resolution, the General Assembly recognized the role of women in peace efforts and development and urged an end to discrimination and an increase of support for women's full and equal participation



PHOTO: Ninwa in class with other students | O. Samuel

THIRST FOR SUCCESS

23 YEAR OLD NINWA IS A SOUTH SUDANESE REFUGEE AND A MOTHER OF 3 LIVING IN KAKUMA. OUR WRITER EMMAN NASRALIA TELLS US THE REASONS BEHIND HER DETERMINATION

Education does not discriminate against colour or age. At 100-years, if you are willing to learn you can still do it. It calls for patience and commitment," says Ninwa.

23-year old Ninwa a mother of 3, is a South Sudanese refugee living in Kakuma. Her strong will for survival and determination to succeed in life, for her 3 young ones, makes her an exceptional woman in the society and a role model for many in her community.

Ninwa is a class 6 pupil at one of the schools in Kakuma. She goes to the same school with her first-born son who is in class 1. She stands out in school, a fact that she does not shy away from. It is break time

and the bell rings. She rushes to her classroom and takes her seat before the teacher walks in. Ninwa, is a hardworking student. According to her class teacher Ninwa performs very well having previously scored 286 marks in the end of year exams in 2014.

"I came to Kakuma in search of a better life for my children and I. Although at my age I believe I am supposed to be somewhere else, I still have hope of making it in future," says Ninwa.

Her frantic search for a job when she arrived in Kakuma did not bear fruits and she has had to survive on the ration provided to her by the World Food Programme. For her, and many others, life in the camp is not easy. The relief food provided by the humanitarian agency is never enough and life becomes even worse



ALTHOUGH I HAVE CHILDREN, THAT WILL NOT STOP ME. INSTEAD IT GIVES ME THE COURAGE AND WILL TO FACE THE WORLD...

for those who do not have a form of employment. Ninwa relates her state of joblessness to her lack of education, a fact that motivated her to take the first step to make a better life for her and her children in future.

“When I arrived in the camp, I thought that people of my age may never get admission into primary school. Young kids and teenage boys and girls were the only people I saw going to school but this did not stop me from dreaming big. I kept going to one primary school near my home to seek admission for my children and when they got admitted, I started looking for my admission and within no time I got a place and I am now in class 6,” she says with a warm smile on her face.

During her adolescent years, she admired marriages. She thought marriage life was easy and fun, not knowing that one day marriage would turn sour for her. She faced a lot of problems in her marriage until she could take it no more. “I want to be like other educated women who are at different levels of education and profession, who make their own decisions and have their own money. Marriage is something that existed since the time of our fore fathers; education came later, and will always be there. Education is the only way to secure a good future for both women and men,” she adds.

Members from her community hold different opinions on her move to get education. She admits that although

some may have a negative perception about her, a lot more think that she made the right move and support her from time to time.

According to her class teacher, Ninwa is not treated like a child in school. “She rarely goes out and is always busy studying or doing something constructive,” says a teacher at her school.

“Although I have children that will not stop me. Instead, it gives me the courage and will to face the world. Every morning I wake up to think of their needs, their future, and the fact that I have no one to help me take good care of them financially or materially pushes me to take a brave step each day,” Says Ninwa.

SAVOURING VICTORY

SOUTH SUDANESE GIRL EMERGES TOP IN 2014 KCPE, KAKUMA

BY CATHY WACHIAYA

KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP, Kenya, February 04 (UNHCR) – 16-year old Naomi Chol stands tall as she watches a wild dust storm blow fiercely across Angelina Jolie Primary School in Kakuma Refugee Camp, North West Kenya. “Everywhere I go, people call me and come to shake my hand,” she says shyly. She is indeed the most talked about teenager in the camp as she emerged the top-performing student in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations, which she sat for at Angelina Jolie Primary School in 2014. She scored 418 out of a possible 500 marks.

Chol’s achievement is no mean feat, considering that she is a refugee living in one of the largest refugee camps in the world where conditions can be uncomfortable. Indeed schooling in Kakuma camp can be difficult as resources are often insufficient especially with the recent influx from South Sudan. Classrooms are usually overcrowded and teachers are inadequately trained. Chol acknowledges that it wasn’t always easy for her to study but her teachers and family encouraged her.

“I am lucky to have studied in a boarding school as it gave me more time to focus on studies. My parents also encouraged me a lot and reminded me of the great opportunity I have to be in



Photo: Naomi in her former class at Angelina Jolie Primary.



Photo: Naomi with a delegation from UNHCR and WTK at Angelina Jolie



PHOTO: Naomi at her aunt's home in Kakuma 1 | O. Samuel

MY PARENTS ALSO ENCOURAGED ME A LOT AND REMINDED ME OF THE GREAT OPPORTUNITY I HAVE TO BE IN SCHOOL

school.”

Chol's family fled conflict in their home in Upper Nile State in South Sudan and traveled to Kenya's capital Nairobi in 2008. As her parents did not have enough money, finding a decent school proved difficult. They thought it best to send her and her siblings to Kakuma to live with an aunt. She enrolled in the girls' only boarding school in 2012. Her main objective was to continue with her studies. "Most of my friends were just at home and some were even getting married off. I didn't want that for myself," she says.

Angelina Jolie, the celebrated actress and UN Special Envoy, established the school on the 2nd of June 2005. She established the school to specifically cater for refugee girls with protection needs that include being unaccompanied or separated from their families by conflict, risk of early marriage and Gender Based Violence.

UNHCR's Education Officer in Kakuma, Mohamud Hure, affirms the importance of ensuring girls have a safe learning environment. "UNHCR is indeed proud of Naomi's achievement which further cements the importance and impact of providing a safe learning environment for refugees," he says. "The school has consistently performed well since its inception and as a result,

the girls are very encouraged to keep performing better."

Despite the challenges of schooling in the camp, 86% of the 1,500 candidates who sat the KCPE exams passed and attained the required grade (at least 200 out of 500 marks) to join secondary school. However, with only four secondary schools in the camp and with such a high pass rate, UNHCR faces a huge challenge to find placements for the sheer number of students who need to transit to secondary schools. As such, more secondary schools need to be established and scholarship programmes identified where students like Chol can continue with secondary education.

Chol's teachers acknowledge this challenge and admit that deserving students like her need to be enrolled in good schools where they can continue to excel. "Chol is an obedient and bright girl," says Isabella Muthoni, the head teacher of the school. "She has made us all very proud and what she has achieved is not only a major boost for all the girls but it is also proof that any girl under any circumstances can achieve success."

Indeed Chol has become a star among her peers. Her former schoolmates surround her, eager to hear what she has to say. "We are proud of what

she has achieved," Anyuak, a Class 5 student says happily. Most of the girls nod in agreement. It is obvious that her performance has done much for their self-esteem and morale.

Chol hopes to attend one of the top schools in the country just like her cousin who sat for the KCPE examination in 2013 and got 396 marks. She is now at Alliance Girls School – a top national school in Nairobi. Chol is happy to have outdone her cousin who also encouraged her to study hard. "I want to be a neurosurgeon," she says. She knows that her dream will require a lot of hard work, but she is not intimidated. "I love science and I know there aren't many female neurosurgeons in the region, but I believe in myself."

She wants to return to her home country one day and contribute to the rebuilding of her nation. "Excelling in my education is the best gift I can offer to my country because with education, one can achieve anything in life."

Chol believes that her journey has just begun. She has high hopes for her future and encourages all girls to believe in themselves. "As a refugee, I know that I have to work twice as hard as anyone else to achieve my dreams.

I am not afraid of hard work, because I know I will reap the benefits."

OLIVIER, THE NEXT BIG THING IN THE FILM INDUSTRY

TERESA DAUDI IS ON HER ROAD TO FAME. AFTER PLAYING OLIVIER, A MAIN CHARACTER IN KAKUMA'S SANDSTORM 5 PART SERIES THAT WAS PRODUCED BY FILMAID, OUR REPORTER CHELIA ROSE HAD AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH HER.

When I saw her for the second time, I thought to myself, is it really her? Is she really the one? The seemingly timid and shy Teresa, who rarely looked into my eyes, was seated at her desk at one of the NGO offices at the Kakuma Refugee Camp. I saw her first on the filming set in Kakuma 1, Ethiopia market during the SandStorm production by FilmAid International. She looked different then, more of a different character. The African dress she wore portrayed her beauty. Olivier is the character she played in the 5-part series SandStorm.

Born in 1995 at the Kakuma Refugee Camp, Teresa was lucky to be brought up in Nairobi away from the harsh life that the camp has to offer. She completed her education in 'down Kenya.' Life in Nairobi taught her a lot of things about life, opened up her mind to think out of the box and gave her character. From the start, she knew what she wanted to be, a famous actress. At the age of 9-years, as she tries to recall, she would try to copy what her friends did and whenever visitors came she would imitate them. "I remember putting on tattered clothes, hide in a corner and whenever someone passed by I would burst into laughter," she says. All this time during the interview, I have only had a glimpse of her eyes once or twice. I wanted to know when she started acting. I was curious and I looked at her and asked her when she started professional acting.

After completing her O-level education, Teresa came back to Kakuma. She joined the Central Dramatist at Youth Centre 1 in Kakuma 1. Here, she hoped to advance her passion for acting. She would write screenplays and get young boys and girls to act for her. Some of her plays were presented during the Youth and Culture Festivals that are held annually at Youth Centre 3 in Kakuma 2. Since then, she has taken part in several plays. "Have you ever taken part in any film/movie before?" I asked her with a curious look on my face. "No, this is the first time am taking part in such a big production," she replies with a smile. I am left to wonder how she got in the production as the main character without previous experience in such productions. I thought to myself that for once Lupita might have been



It was much easier to act in this film as it had a written script as compared to the traditional acting that groups do here in the camps

right when she said that it did not matter where you came from, your dreams are valid. For her, like Lupita, her dreams were slowly coming true.

“When I heard that there will be an audition at Youth Resource Centre 1, I said to myself why not give it a try. I did not know that I would be picked so after the audition I just went home and waited for a call from the director. The following day she called and offered me a part to play in the production,” says Teresa.

That call might have changed her life and opened her eyes to the world of acting. She is now certain that she has a future in acting. At first, as she confesses, she joined theatre so as to avoid being idle. She had seen firsthand what idleness did to people in the camps. The youth turned to drugs and alcohol and waves of crime swept the area. She did not want to be among the statistics so she chose to put her talent into use. She first got a role as a supporting character in the SandStorm series but was later given a role as the main character, because of her personality and her ability to master the script better than the other girls. Since it was her first time acting in front of camera, she admits that the first day was hard but with time she got into character.

When acting in a multinational setup, the main challenge that actors face is language barrier. The most commonly used languages by theatre groups in the camp are English and Swahili. Most of the audiences use their first language. “It was much easier to act in this film as it had a written script as compared to the traditional acting that groups do here in the camps,” says Teresa. She identifies costumes and props as another challenge that they face as upcoming actors and theatre groups. “Most, if not all groups, cannot afford these basic requirements and they have no sponsors. This makes most groups lose hope and fall apart,” says Teresa.

Like the Award winning Kenyan, Lupita Nyong’o who starred in the film 12 Years a Slave, Teresa Daudi is on her way to stardom. “Talent is a gift from God, everyone has a talent but many are yet to discover theirs. Everyone should discover their talent and practice more so as to perfect their skills,” advises Teresa. She is hopeful of pursuing her tertiary education in the near future.

At only 20-years, Teresa has achieved what most actors in the Camp and the world across dream of. Hers is not just a success story but also a story of a dream come true. Her dream is to one day act in Hollywood and bag awards like her role model, Lupita. She understands that to achieve this, she will have to keep acting and keep dreaming big.



PHOTOS: SandStorm series Behind-The-Scene shots courtesy of FilmAid



FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

ASHA ALI RUNS A CLOTHES SHOP IN THE HEART OF KAKUMA 2 MARKET. NOOR RAHMO TELLS US HOW SHE STARTED HER BUSINESS



PHOTO: Asha Ali at her shop in Kakuma 2 market | O. Samuel

Asha Ali Mohammed is a single mother of 6. Being the eldest and the only girl in a family of 8, life was not exhilarating at all as she recalls.

She used to help her mother with house chores and prepare her younger brothers for school or 'madrassa'. She wished to go to school, but her male chauvinist society could not allow. As a woman she is supposed to be in the kitchen and be married afterwards to sire children. Therefore educating a girl was viewed as a waste of resources.

Soon afterwards, Asha thrived to become a beautiful girl and was married off as a second wife to a man almost twice her age. She moved with her husband to Mogadishu to start a new life. Being under age, she faced problems in handling duties of a wife and more so the loneliness she encountered was great as she was far away from her siblings. Her husband was rarely seen at home.

As the family grew bigger with time, the little income of her husband was not enough to cater for the wellbeing of her family because it had to be shared between 2 families. The fighting in Somalia escalated and after two weeks she lost her family in a bomb blast that had occurred near her home at night. It was a big tragedy for her

to lose all her family members at once and worst of all, their bodies were not recovered. She could not hold back her tears when she narrated the incident.

Her marriage was not a bed of roses and in 2003 he divorced her, leaving her with 6 children. She decided to take care of her children single handedly. She said, "If I neglected them who else would they turn to? I am not educated and the little my husband used to bring was better than none. Taking care of 6 children singlehandedly was a huge burden to me, but I knew the lord was watching over me." The war forced her to flee. "I used the little money I got from selling my plot for my transport to Kakuma," she said.

"On arriving in Kakuma, I was given temporary shelter, food and utensils to use," she said. She adapted to the life in the camp very fast, but her children took long to adapt. Her children were enrolled in school, but she had no money to buy them books and uniform. "I felt hurt when one of my children told me that I am not fit enough to be her mother just because I could not afford to buy her books," she said. One day when she was walking on the streets, she saw some men playing ludo and at the same time chewing 'miraa' (khat), and taking tea. She concluded that selling tea would be a favorable business for her.

"I went to Mr. Khalifa, a shopkeeper near my home, and asked for 2 kilograms of sugar, 2 packets of tea leaves, and some milk powder on credit. He gladly accepted my request and promised to support me. I immediately started selling tea by the road side."

Her first profit was 50 shillings. She used 20 shillings to buy exercise books for her children, 10 shillings for sugar, 10 shillings for kerosene so that they could read at night and saved the rest. "I only sold tea in the evenings, and so I thought that getting another job to do would be a good idea. So I started washing clothes for people and was paid" she said.

After a period of 3 years, her savings had increased and so she decided to sell second hand clothes upon identifying the demand for clothes in the area. Since she was the only person selling second hand clothes, she had a lot of customers. After a while she expanded her business and started selling new clothes too.

"My business grew with time as my customers liked my clothes," she said. She is now able to cater for her children's needs and also support her cousin who was relocated from Ifo Camp in Dadaab. "I would like to tell others that a coin invested accordingly after exploring business opportunities can multiply," she said.

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YEAR OLD MOTHER OF 51

AOL, A SOUTH SUDANESE REFUGEE IS AN EXTRA ORDINARY WOMAN. SHE HAS 51 CHILDREN, 45 OF WHOM ARE FOSTERED UNACCOMPANIED MINORS. **MAKER MAYEN** SPENT SOME TIME WITH HER AND HER CHILDREN.

A lot has been said about women; both positive and negative, songs sang for women by the world's greatest musicians, but not so much has been done to recognize their efforts. I have heard stories of great women most of whom I have never met and may never get a chance to meet them. African women have done a lot to try and make the world a better place. The late Prof. Wangari Maathai of Kenya won the Nobel Peace prize for her love and dedication to conserving the environment. Mother Teresa has been immortalized for her acts of kindness and selflessness. Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is the world's first elected black female president and Africa's first





PHOTO: Aol sits outside her house with her last born son (biological son)
|By Otieno Samuel



PHOTO: Aol with some of her children |By Otieno Samuel

MY CHILDREN ARE USED TO THEM AND IT DOES NOT BOTHER THEM WHEN I GIVE THEM SPECIAL ATTENTION OR NOT

elected female head of state. Sometimes, I tend to think we look too far for these heroines when we have greater people right under our noses.

Where would you be without your mother? For many, motherhood comes with responsibility; the responsibility to care for your family, the responsibility to teach children right from wrong, to ensure that they are always safe and so much more. For some like Aol Magot Deng motherhood is a calling.

Aol Magot Deng is a mother of 6 living in Hong Kong, Kakuma. She is also the mother to 45 other unaccompanied minors. It is easy to see that she has a huge responsibility that she has taken upon herself. All that she goes through raising 51 children is well hidden behind her smile and the beautiful marks she has on her face. Among the 45 fostered children 9 are girls the youngest of them being 9 and the oldest 18-years of age.

Aol believes in the reverse philosophy that behind a successful woman, there must be an active man. She acknowledges that her husband Andrew, who works at one of the NGOs as a machine operator, has been instrumental in caring for the children. Andrew, being an incentive staff earns Ksh 5,200 per month, but his earnings are never used to buy any food to supplement the food ration that they receive from World Food Program. Instead it is kept for rainy days.

Aol is a woman with a very high maternal instinct. She vows that she will never chase away a child and wonders how other women can easily chase away other people's children. She gets most of the children from the Reception Centre after her community informs her of new arrival and unaccompanied children from her country South Sudan. She then goes and talks to the authorities to allow her foster these children, a request which is granted to her.

As a mother, Mama Mabior knows best what bringing up children means. Her emaciated body perhaps explains the sacrifices she has made and the burden she has on her shoulders. At home, the family takes their dinner under the beautiful evening sky. They sit in groups of around 10 people and

when you enter their compound they all welcome you to eat with them. It is almost impossible to pick out her biological children from the 51 children in her compound. Mama Mabior is the last one to eat after all her children are satisfied. Due to the large number of people in her compound the one latrine that they have has to be cleaned often, something that she does not mind doing.

All her children go to school. Although she is not learned, she understands the importance of education. Majority of her children are enrolled at Cush Primary School, which is a few minutes walk from her home. Cush, like many primary schools in the camp, operates on a double shift system where pupils go to class in shifts. One group would go in the morning while the other comes in the afternoon. Mama Mabior's children also attend school in shifts. One group goes to school in the morning while others remain behind to help with house chores until 2pm when they too report to school.

18-year old Garang Mayiek is one of Mama Mabior's fostered children. He admits that 'mama,' as they refer to Aol, is a mother with difference. "She does not treat us differently but treats us in the same way she treats her own children," he says. Garang was 16 years old when Aol took him and his younger brother in from the Reception Centre. Since then, Aol is the only mother figure he has known. Aol says she has not received any support from the agencies and calls upon anyone with a big heart to come to her rescue. The biggest challenge that she faces is getting clothes and shoes for all her 51 children.

It is amazing to see all these children together. The discipline in them as they all run to greet me melts my heart. They all live in one big compound with many semi permanent structures that they call home. They all share everything they have, as they understand that the little they have is sometimes all they have. I have had a chance to visit them at night and seen how they eat in groups, sitting outside under the moon and how they also sleep in groups.

Mama Mabior, as many commonly refer her to, has gone through tough times at some points. She vividly recalls the state of devastation that she was in after the hospital became her home in the aftermath of the heavy downpour. Many of her children fell ill from malaria and were admitted. She did not suffer alone as many other families were affected too. It poses a greater challenge when her girls are admitted and her sons, who are ideally supposed to help her care for the sick, are not allowed to spend the night at ladies' ward at the Main Hospital hence leaving her to do it all alone.

On a lighter note during the interview, Mama Mabior admits that it's challenging as well as heart warming when her kids below the age of 10 compete for their mother's warmth and attention. This competition at some point pushed her own children to the wall and left them feeling neglected by their biological mother. "That was some months ago when the fostered children were welcomed into my family, but now things are different. My children are used to them and it does not bother them when I give them special attention or not," says Aol.

As an African woman, Mama Mabior believes that these children are a blessing to her and the whole nation if not the whole world. She compares them to protected and well-stored seeds that will germinate into beautiful and amazing people who will bear the name of a once forgotten nation in future, South Sudan.



PHOTO: Aol sits outside her house with her last-born son.

MAMA, MAKE IT HAPPEN

POEM BY PENDO CHERYL

Keep calm and carry on, don't let people bring down, Focus on those who do good, forget the ones who don't,
For God, can heal whatever pain this life may bring you, Be courageous and believe that all the failures you may feel right now is nothing compared to the success you will enjoy all through your struggle.
For nobody has the power to stop what you have achieved, But always show them that all can make it happen,
Keep people in your life who help you achieve, succeed, motivate you, encourage you, inspire you, enhance you, and make you happy. Those who do not support you to make it happen let them go.
Be strong 'mama' for things will get better, It may be hard and difficult to achieve now, But one day things will be smooth forever, What your hand touches as a trial is what prospers you, No mater how difficult life gets; You still have one more trial to make it happen.
When you say that make it happen, it literally means That you mean it and deserves fruits it withers A lot of women would rather give up because They are tired of their patience and ending up with nothing
When thing go wrong as they may sometimes When trials are high but success is low And you want to smile but you have to struggle When support is pressing you down a bit Rest if you must but don't you quit Though you may succeed with another blow
A faint heart never wins a fair success It's not over until it's over The most powerful tool in the world is the mind Success if failure turned inside out For happy women are the ones who make it happen.

I DID NOT DIE, BUT LIVING IS PROVING MUCH HARDER

SHE WAS ONLY 13 YEARS OLD WHEN SHE GOT INFECTED. SHE LOST HER HUSBAND AND FIRST CHILD TO HIV BUT SHE STILL FINDS ENOUGH COURAGE TO MOVE ON IN HER THREE CHILDREN. BEATRICE, A PEER LEADER IN KAKUMA 4 TALKS TO **CHELIA ROSE** ON HER LIFE AND WHY SHE HAS TO BE STRONG



On our arrival to Kakuma 4, New Area – ‘Nyumba mpya,’ (Swahili for new houses) we met an extraordinary woman. She has been through a lot and her story is that of perseverance and will to survive. Her will is stronger than she looks.

We first met Beatrice at Kakuma 1, Napata grounds in December 2014 during the World Aids Day. She is living with HIV/Aids, and on that day she gathered enough courage to talk about her life to a multitude of people that had gathered to mark this important day.

Beatrice is a mother of three, 2 girls and a boy. Her children are all HIVnegative. On this day, we found her

two beautiful girls playing outside their makeshift house in Kakuma 4 oblivious of the state of their mother. The youngest Carol (Not her real name) runs to our car and welcomes us with a smile. She then offers us a cup of water and we could not say no to such a kind offer. Beatrice looks weak, however she struggles to smile perhaps to hide what she is going through.

She got the infection from her late husband back when she was in Congo, her home country. She was only 13 years old when she got mentally ill and her father’s friend took her in and later married her off after she got well. The mental illness that she suffered from affects her memory to date. Her people rejected her because she had HIV. They

even told her that they would not bury her. She had to leave. Beatrice had no one to care for her as she was the only one alive in a family of fourteen.

She gave birth to her first child when she was in Tanzania together with her husband. Unfortunately the child was born positive and did not make it, he passed on. She contracted the disease when she was only 13 and has since lived with the disease for more than 15 years. “HIV is not the end of life,” she says. “If you are infected you still have a chance to life.”

By this time, her two daughters who are playing outside come into the house and sit beside me. I felt for them as they stared deep into my eyes as if

they were asking me to help their mum. I quickly say to myself that life is not fair. Their mum looks at them and smiles, she then asks them to leave the room. The youngest takes a big cup, fills it with water and drinks it. She then smiles and runs outside...

"The amount of medication that I take is more than the food that I take," she begins. "If I were to show you the number of tablets I swallow each day you'd feel pity for me." She admits that she had not taken her medication for a day now. Beatrice knows the effects of skipping her medication but she also knows what will happen if she takes them without eating. The effect is even worse. "We have not seen fire in this house for a day now, my children are hungry," she says. We learn that she gets the same ration with other people despite her condition and her body needs special food. She remembers the day her youngest daughter asked her to take her back home. She thought it would be better if her mother would die at home rather than in this jungle. These words pierced her heart. She tries to remain strong for her children taking each day as it comes. With no employment, she can barely afford anything on her own and has to make do with the little that they have.

Beatrice is playing a key role in ensuring that her community and the women in her area are not adding to the already existing number of infected people in the camps. She is working as a peer leader for women who engage in commercial sex. She has reached 10 women in less than a month's time since she got the job (as at the time this interview was conducted). She offers advice based on her personal experiences. She also offers talks whenever there is a health related event such as the World Aids Day. She is responsible for taking them for testing and advising them on medication. "I tell them that being positive is not the end of life. Positive living and prevention of more infections is important," she says. "I also advise women especially those who engage in commercial sex on the importance of the C-word. Condoms are not only important in preventing HIV and other sexual infections but

also in preventing unwanted pregnancies." Beatrice knows the importance of protecting the ones you love. She regularly takes her children for testing just to be sure that they are not infected. She is also always careful not to involuntarily infect them.

"I did not die, but living is proving much harder," says Beatrice in a low tone. From her tone you can tell that her life is challenging, but she somehow finds her way back to her feet. "Mimi sina mbele wala nyuma, juu wala chini na kuishi ni kwa maombi tu," (I have nothing, but I live by grace) she says. To supplement the ration she receives from WFP, Beatrice has grown some vegetables on a small piece of land right outside her door. "It is not enough, but it helps." Many are the times that her vegetables wither because she lacks the energy to water them, but when they flourish they provide her and her family with important nourishment.

She lives alone with her children at 'Nyumba Mpya.' This makes her vulnerable. She points us to a stitched up part of her plastic wall. She tells us that one day when she had gone to collect her medication from IRC hospital unknown people came to her house and cut the plastic wall open and made away with her None Food Items (NFIs) and the food that they could get their hands on. She reported the case to the police, but help is yet to come.

As we conclude our interview, I ask myself 'how could life be so unfair?' Before my colleague could take her photo, she asks us if we will help her. I did not know what to say, but I had to tell her the truth. "We cannot help you directly" I replied, "but by writing your story we are giving you a voice and hope that someone somewhere will read your story and offer you or other strong women like you help." She smiled and I knew I had touched a life.

Through her struggle with life, she still finds it in her heart to help others like her by sharing her story. She is a woman worth celebrating.

**MIMI SINA
MBELE
WALA
NYUMA,
JUU WALA
CHINI NA
KUISHI
NI KWA
MAOMBI
TU**

PHOTO:
Beatrice
during the
2014 World
Aids Day
at Napata
Grounds | O.
Samuel



BLENDING TRADITION WITH TECHNOLOGY

MAMA BIAGKA, IS PERHAPS THE ONLY TAILOR WITH AN ELECTRIC SEWING MACHINE IN KAKUMA. EMMAN NASIRALA TAKES US THROUGH HER JOURNEY TO SUCCESS.



PHOTO: Mama Biagka at her shop in HongKhong market | O. Samuel

I USED MOST OF THE MONEY I MADE FROM MY BUSINESS TO EDUCATE MY DAUGHTER

Mama Biagka arrived at the Kakuma Refugee Camp in 1993, barely one year after the camp was officially opened to offer home away from home for refugees who were fleeing the Sudan civil war that lasted for over a decade. For her, life in the camp has taught her to fend for herself and her kids. She has learned the true value of the shilling and has been forced to make do with the little she has. However, low times did not keep her down as her determination to succeed blossomed.

Her first business was selling tea at the market. Though business was not that good she saved enough to open a small 'hotel' where she would sell bread and beans at the market. She

had big dreams, dreams to better her family's life, and so after a while she had saved enough to take her to Nakuru for a training course in sewing. She succeeded and came back to Kakuma to start a new life. However, it was hard for her to get the tools she needed for her trade and so she had to go back to selling bread and beans to make ends meet. She looks jovial all along the interview and her eyes glimmer with hope.

Mama Biagka, together with other women who shared the same idea with her formed a self-help group commonly known as a 'chama' in swahili. They would contribute Ksh. 1,000 each monthly and give it to one of the

WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU LEMON...



"I sold all my clothes to start a business so that I can help my children," says Mary. Mary is a single mother of 5. She arrived in Kakuma in 2002 from South Sudan. All her children are learning at Hope Primary School in Kakuma 4.

She runs a small make shift hotel in the heart of Kakuma 4, New Area. She sells Sudanese traditional spiced tea. She is a hard working woman. Mary tells us that she runs her business from early morning to noon, After that, she goes home to prepare lunch for her children and do other house chores, and then goes back to work from 3:00pm to 7 O'clock. Like most refugee women, Mary has had to find a way to make ends meet. She has no idea where her husband is and since she has no one else to depend on, she has been forced to start her own business.

"Sometimes I have to take sugar on debt for my business to run," she says. "I have also learned to make the most out of what I get from my business. For example if I get 50 shillings, I will use 20 shillings to pay my debt and use the rest to purchase charcoal." Mary admits that even though her business does not earn her as much as she would like to, she has to run it for the sake of her children.

She has been running her small hotel for a year now. She encourages women to take the bold step to do something and not to sit down and cry over their current situation. She says that every shilling counts and should be spent wisely. Her customers keep coming back because of her services and her dedication to giving them the best. She is hopeful that life will get better in future.

women in turns. It is here that she got enough money to purchase her first sewing machine. Being a hard-working woman, she decided to put her recently acquired skills into use and started a tailoring shop. "I used most of the money I made from my business to educate my daughter," she says with a smile as she holds her daughters hand. Meanwhile, she still runs the small 'hotel' business.

After saving enough money, she bought her second sewing machine. This time she bought an electric sewing machine that required less effort. With the electric machine, her work has improved. Kakuma is not connected to the country's main power supply grid and people depend on privately owned generators as a source of power. As a result, residents experience regular power rationing so as to save on the cost of fuel. This limits her working hours to 5 hours daily for 6 days a week. She works from 9:00am to 12:00noon and then from 4:00pm to 6:00pm when electricity is switched back on. "We have lights from 9am every day to noon, then from 4pm to 10pm. I have to close my shop early enough, because I am a mother and I have to cook for my children," says Mama Biagka.

Mama Biagka is perhaps the only woman in Kakuma who sews beautiful flowers using an electric machine as most other women and men in the

business use the traditional sewing machine. Her children have also learned the craft over time. She admits that most of the good designs she has of bed sheets were hand drawn by her children.

"I get materials all the way from Nairobi and I also buy materials depending on the amount of money I have. On a good day I purchase a roll, which can be cut into four pieces of bed sheets. I sell small pieces at Ksh. 3,000 and larger pieces at Ksh. 4,000 each."

The greatest challenge she faces is from customers who fail to pay her for her services in good time, and when they do a greater part of the money is used in clearing debts and buying food. She also grapples with the high cost of electricity having to part with Ksh. 4,000 per month for her electricity bills. A small business like hers faces financial challenges since Kakuma lacks financial institutions that offer loans. "I fear that one day my business will become bankrupt and I will not have a place to cushion me at all," she continues, "I call upon the humanitarian agencies to come to the aid of small businesses," she concludes. In her final words as we parted, Mama Biagka advises women to take the first steps into making lives better for themselves and their families and not to wait for someone else to do it for them.



A SELFLESS TEACHER AND MOTHER

CAROLINE ACHA HAS SACRIFICED A LOT FOR THE EDUCATION OF BOTH HER CHILDREN AND OTHERS.

UKECH DANIEL SPENT A DAY WITH HER AND THIS IS WHAT HE FOUND OUT.



In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, “a woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacity...” If by strength it means moral power, then women are immeasurably superior to men... For a future without violence, the future is with women...

Both men and women are similar in terms of strength, but we often forget to give attention to the strength of a woman. Kakuma Refugee Camp has women from diverse parts of Africa and very few are acknowledged for their services and success in the camp.

Caroline Acha, a mother of 9, sacrifices a lot to ensure that children get education. She came to the camp in 1993 after war broke out in her country.

Despite her highest level of education at that time being primary level, she managed to communicate well in

English. In 1995, there was a very high demand for female pre-school teachers. Being a learned mother, actually one of the very few in the camp those days, she decided to take her chances. She never hesitated and immediately applied; she knew that was the only opportunity that would save her from academic oblivion.

After a few days, they were called for an interview and she successfully passed. She was assigned as a teacher at Gilo pre-school. It was then that her academic service in the camp began. “We were motivated with Ksh. 1840 per month, which was a lot considering the financial standards of those days,” she explains. She joined an induction course for 2 years and was transferred from Gilo Pre-school to Tarach Pre-school, but after a few years she was taken back to Gilo.

Acha was not only a teacher but also a mother to many children in school. She

WE WERE MOTIVATED WITH Ksh. 1,840 PER MONTH, WHICH WAS A LOT CONSIDERING THE FINANCIAL STANDARDS OF THOSE DAYS

KSH 1,080

THE AMOUNT SHE EARNED IN 1995



is a mother and mentor to many who have passed through her able hands. Although handling children is often challenging she chose to take it as a challenge.

In 2008 she was promoted to become the deputy head teacher but after a few weeks the head teacher left and never returned. "The situation forced me to act as the head teacher and the deputy at the same time. After some months, a deputy head teacher was hired and Acha was promoted to the position of the head teacher."

The job was very challenging and she thought stepping down would be a relief. But just before she resigned, she realized that the overall negative impacts outweighed the positive ones and so she decided to continue with the job and face the challenges with courage.

Her family is also demanding, and therefore she has to do the house chores and school work in equal measure. "My daily routine is normally very exhausting as I have to wake up very early in the morning to fetch water and prepare breakfast for my children before they go to school," she says, "I am also needed in school very early."

She has been a good mother, very supportive and encouraging," says Tom, one of her sons, during our interview. A woman with such distinction is a figure of encouragement to many, more so to women.



THE TALES OF HELEN

A PROMISING FUTURE

BY JOSEPH OKELLO'O

Helen sat down on a warm comfortable chair and remembered her home where she used to seat on a stool when cooking. The room she was in was very clean and neatly arranged with air conditioners. She is a daughter of the late Magda Nadio and Lotelex, the only daughter in a family of 8.

"I did not know that one day I'd become who I am today," she said with tears in her eyes. As the only girl, her daily chores were numerous. She had to wash dishes, sweep the compound, wash clothes, just to mention a few. She wanted to go to school just like other girls but all seemed to be in vain. Her father, who was a soldier then, kept her strictly within their compound. "I saw my future clouded and slowly fading away," she recalled.

Her mother had wanted her to go to school, but the man she was living under was very strict. When she was 8 years old, her mother decided that enough is enough, "My daughter should go to school and learn," her mother said bravely. Helen pitied her mother knowing very well what will happen to her next. Later in the evening, her father arrived from the military camp. Her mother had a mission to accomplish and waited for him to relax mentally. She then approached him politely. "I did not know what she told him, but she later came to me and told me that I was to go to school the following day," says Helen. At first she thought it was a joke, but later realized that it was true.

"I joined a nearby school with tough rules laid on me," she said. She could only make 2 trips per day, going and coming from school. Her father had instructed that she should be watched over her keenly. "In school, I mainly play football and rarely volleyball," her mother would always listen to her with curiosity whenever she narrated her stories. She was her solace whenever sadness overtook her.

When she was 15 years old, in class

7 by then, her father announced that he had prepared a future husband for her. On hearing the news, Helen fainted. Her mother tried to fight for her daughter's well-being, but all fell on deaf ears.

Within the same month, her father was promoted to captainship and had to move to another town. This was a relief to the ever-stressed Helen. That year, she sat for her final primary exams and passed with flying colours. The missionary sisters, who her mother worked with, took Helen and granted her a scholarship after hearing about her performance in school. She was then taken to Bakhita Girls Boarding School. When her father heard of this, he was very angry but his post as a captain kept him from coming back home.

Life in secondary was fun to Helen. She played for the school football team, was a member of the school debate club and was also a member of the journalism club.

She got pregnant upon reaching form 3, but rejoined school after delivering. Her mother then passed away. "This was when life became tough," she remembered. She had to look after her younger brothers and the whole family.

She later got a letter from a radio station inviting her to work as a reporter. "I could not hesitate to reply," she said. Reporting was not her dream. She always wanted to play football, but she just took the job considering the circumstances she was in. She had to go to the field to collect information and send them to editors who were in a different town. She always had the best news and the editors loved her work. With her earnings she managed to cater for her family's needs. When her father came home, he was ashamed to call her daughter. "I cried when I saw my father kneeling and asking me for forgiveness," said Helen.

IN MEMORY OF MY NUMBER ONE WOMAN

MY MOTHER WAS THE BEST WOMAN I KNOW IN MY LIFE AND I WILL FOREVER FOLLOW HER FOOTSTEPS. SHE PASSED ON 13TH APRIL 2011.

Kude Nadio, my beloved mother, was not a typical South Sudanese as many people would think. Her family settled in Chukudum, South Sudan after the displacement back from her motherland. Her father, my grandfather, Nyemudalem was a hard working man who worked tirelessly through the rainy weather and scorching sun. Rumor had it that the man could get double harvests every season.

"We lived in a concrete house in the outskirts of the town," my mother narrated to me as I sat down to listen. "One day, we heard my neighbour scream for help..." She paused and I asked her what happened next. I could read from her face that whatever it was, it was not going to sound good. Anyway, I believed that the wind will whisper it out louder to the people or the wall behind me will shout and scream out my identity as I cannot tell it out by word of mouth.

"The LRA attacked our neighbours," she said in a now shaky and fearful voice. The militants had gathered every one of our neighbours; men and women, the young and old, and made them sit in a circle. In my mind I wondered if they could resist the Lord Resistant Army (LRA). The LRA were known and feared for their inhumane way of life and merciless killings. "My mother was only 14 years then. "As the militants forced people to lie on their tummy, my grandfather hid me and my 4 siblings," she said. Her father and mother were among the people captured by the militants.

The militants tortured and killed the people they had captured; her parents included, and burnt their houses before leaving. The house that she was in, together with her grandfather and other sibling was torched. In a desperate attempt to save them, her grandfather put them into a large empty water tank that was in one corner of the house and covered it with a wet blanket. The wet blanket prevented the fire from burning them alive, but as the house

burnt down the tank became too hot. Her grandfather was severely burnt on the back and my mother was burnt on her right shoulder. It was too hot inside, but outside was worse.

As the fire burnt out, the blanket became dry and was almost catching fire. Her grandfather threw it down on the floor and they jumped out of the water tank. Luckily, by this time the militia had left the scene. My mother and her siblings had to flee to South Sudan (Sudan at that time) to seek refuge. The journey to Sudan took 3 grueling days with her grandfather having to cope with fatigue and the pain from the burns on his back. She would help treat him using herbs as he directed her. On arrival at Chukudum, they met a good-hearted woman who took them to her home. The Refugee Magazine | Issue #5

She went to a nearby catholic church and joined the choir. It is here that she met the love of her life, Mourice Naold, who proposed to her at a later stage. In 1987, my mum got her first son and named him Oka, after her father.

After the war broke out, they moved to the camp in 1996 where they lived until 1998 when they went back. By this time she had 5 children. Back at home, she became a devoted Catholic who volunteered most of her time helping young kids and teaching them how to pray. She had a small farm where she grew millet. Later, she became a Catechist then converted to a nun. She was liked, if not loved, by many because of her kind and helpful nature. The parish priest called her his mother and named one of her sons after him, Joseph Okello'o, and that's who I am.

She never knew that her 2 sons, my brother Paul who died recently and I, were alive. "I almost beat him up when he arrived without you," she said with tears rolling down her cheeks. I always took myself as an orphan until I met her. Her eldest son, Oka, went to a driving course and was later employed by

the Norwegian Peoples Aid (N.P.A).

When I arrived home, South Sudan, for the first time from Kakuma, I was first taken to my sister whom I had never met before. "I am Okello'o, could you please show me Naold's place?" I asked. She fell down and cried bitterly before leading me to where my mother was. On reaching, I met a certain woman and sat with her for a moment to ask her where my mother was. She looked at me in disbelief and hugged me tightly. That was when I saw my mother for the first time. I could read happiness in her eyes, which were flooded with tears. "My son," she uttered in mother tongue, which took me several days to understand.

I only spent 3 weeks with her as I was to come back to school in the camp. She is a business woman and owns a restaurant. She also cooks for Norwegian builders. In the evening, a lot of people pay the restaurant a visit for something to eat or drink. She used her earnings to cater for my siblings needs. My father was then in the military. He had married another wife and moved on with her. His second wife later left him. Circumstances forced him to return home. Despite all the suffering he had caused my mother, he was always welcome and taken good care of.

One cool morning as I was walking out of my house, I saw a woman sitting next to my door. I was half naked and was ashamed of standing in front of her. I shyly greeted her and went back to the house. "What does she want here as early as now?" I asked myself curiously. She called me back, and after a moment of silence, she uttered a word. "Okello'o," she said, "I want you to be yourself and leave as you did before. Your mother is gone to the world of no return. All of us will one day rest with her." Before she could even finish, I had already known what she was telling me. "You can't be serious." Tears flooded my eyes with pain. She had died of a heart attack.

It was very painful to realize that she had gone without telling me why I had not known my father for such a long time. I could still hear her telling me that one day I would live like a dog once she is out of this world. My life is now just the way she had told me it would be. Many people who knew her attended her funeral. The wind that forced me to say my mother's secret should show me where I belong.

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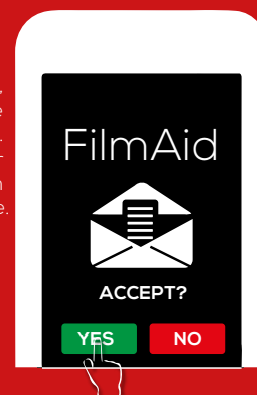
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