

# THE Refugee

16 DAYS AGAINST GBV SPECIAL EDITION

MAGAZINE  
Kakuma Edition  
ISSUE #4



**16** DAYS  
OF ACTIVISM  
AGAINST GBV

# **1616**  
CAMPAIGN

FOCUS ON

## EARLY MARRIAGE

TOUCHING STORIES FROM KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP

Views expressed in this publication do NOT reflect those of FilmAid, UNHCR, or BPRM.



# #16 16

CAMPAIGN

## Promoting Rights and Supporting Childhoods

*Lets work together to end early Marriage*

Everyday at 1616Hours, for 16 Days beginning 25th November 2014, the #1616 team will be running a campaign on Facebook and Twitter using the hash tags;

[#16DaysOfActivism](#) [#16:16campaign](#)  
[#TakeAction](#) [#EndChildMarriage](#)  
[#KakumaSGBV\\_WorkingGroup](#)

Tune in to Radio Atanayeche for programs on Early Marriage at 1616Hours, during the 16 Days of Activism.



@therefugeekak



The Refugee Mag, KAK Ed



Radio Atanayeche

# editorial

The harsh reality that many people may not believe or not want to believe is; everyday 39,000 girls are married off before their 15th Birthday (Stats. according to UNICEF).

A lot of African communities still practice child marriages despite the fact that it is illegal in most of these countries. The perpetrators do this not giving a thought to the devastating effect it has on the innocent young girls. I bet they do not. The practice has adverse effects on the health, growth, and mental health of millions of girls globally. In Kakuma it is still a problem that many girls face.

What is outstanding is the fact that these young girls suffer in the hands of those closest to them, the very people who are supposed to protect and take good care of them; their own parents and relatives.

This is a special edition for the 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE and is dedicated to the survivors of early marriage and those dedicated to ending this practice. We have covered emotional stories from survivors and tried our best to get you medical, religious, psychosocial and other opinions on the issue to give you a broader understanding of the practice and the effects it has on the young ones.

It is important to note that the names of the survivors, names of places and schools, and photographs have been altered or hidden to protect the identities of the survivors. Some of the photographs used are from the internet and do not represent actual people in the stories unless otherwise indicated.

Editor In Chief

Otieno Samuel

**Contact Us:** [therefugeekak@gmail.com](mailto:therefugeekak@gmail.com)

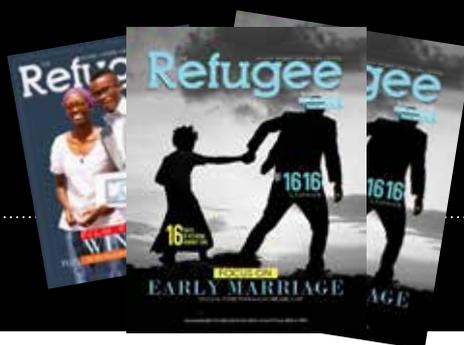
[t @therefugeekak](#) [f The Refugee Mag, KAK Ed](#)

This Magazine is written by refugees living in Kakuma Refugee Camp. It is printed by FilmAid with support from BPRM

INSIDE

# EARLY MARRIAGE SURVIVORS

They survived to tell their stories;  
others did not. For those who  
did, their lives will never be the  
same.



## THE TEAM

---

**CHIEF EDITOR**

OTIENO SAMUEL

**EDITOR**

RUKIYA SALESA

**PHOTOGRAPHER**

OTIENO SAMUEL,  
JOSEPHAT EKIRU

**COPY EDITOR**

BERNADETTE OTIENO

**WRITERS**

DAWIT EJIGU,  
CHELIA ROSE,  
OMARI MOHAMED,  
PASCAL ZIGASHANE,

**LAYOUT/DESIGN**

OTIENO SAMUEL

---

# THEY TOOK AWAY MY INNOCENCE BUT THEY CAN'T TAKE AWAY MY FUTURE

WHEN HER PARENTS PASSED AWAY ON THE SAME DAY, HER WORLD ALMOST ENDED. HER UNCLE TOOK HER IN ONLY TO TURN OUT TO BE HER WORST NIGHTMARE

I am telling my story to you only because I do not want any other girl child to go through the same experiences that I have gone through.

I was born in Congo as the only child to my parents. I lost my mum and dad on the same day when I was in Congo in the year 2010. After my parents death my uncle, my father's younger brother, came for me and promised to take care of me. My uncle had a wife and three sons then.

On the way to his home, he turned against me. He defiled me thrice taking away my innocence and virginity with him. He threatened to kill me if I told anyone what he had done to me. We got to his home and after a few weeks my body started changing. I did not understand what was happening to my body. My aunt took me to a nearby hospital where I was tested and found to be a few weeks pregnant.

My uncle then forced me to say that I had a boyfriend who was responsible for the pregnancy. No one would have believed me

anyway so I played along. He was a soldier and most his time was spent in the forests. At one time he asked his wife to allow him to take me along into the forests so that I could go help take care of him while he was away from his wife. My aunt disagreed with him since by then I was a few months pregnant. I carried my pregnancy to full term though I had many complications all along.

I was only 15 when I gave birth to a baby boy. Unfortunately, my son developed some respiratory complications when he was two weeks old and passed on. We had a funeral for him, I was too young to bury my young one. I did not have my menstrual cycle for more than 1 year and doctors did all they could to try save me. Living in my uncle's house would then prove difficult as each day I laid my eyes on him reminded me of his beastly acts and I felt I had to run away. Run as fast as my feet could carry me.

I met this woman who promised me a house help job in the northern parts of Congo. I was glad

to get a chance to get away and so I took the chance and went with the woman to her house. After the first month of working for her, the woman refused to pay me as we had agreed. She told me that I should not ask for any payment since she was already providing me with food and a place to sleep. I could not take this. I wanted to go to school and have a bright future.

By luck I met a long distance truck driver. The driver was on his way to get petroleum from Kenya and offered to take me with him to Nairobi. I was happy to get away from the miserable life that I had lived and my hopes were reignited once again. But my miserable life just could not go away so soon. On the way the driver turned against me. He used me for the whole journey to Kenya from Congo. The journey took six gruelling days.

On reaching Nairobi I went to the Kenyan police and asked them to help me. I told them my story and shortly afterwards they took me to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Nairobi where I was



I did not understand what was happening to my body. My aunt took me to a nearby hospital where I was tested and found to be a few weeks pregnant.

accommodated for almost 6 months. During my stay there, I would keep asking them to take me to school. I was persistent and after a while I was transferred to Kakuma Refugee Camp where I was taken to the reception centre. Here I was enrolled at a primary school in Kakuma. I felt happy to finally be back to school.

Since I was an unaccompanied minor, the UNHCR and partner agencies tried to get me a foster family. The first family refused to take me in as I had no knowledge of any other language apart from my native language. I refused to be taken by the second and third families that were brought to me as I feared what they might do to me as my wounds were still fresh. I stayed at the reception area for a few months while going to school.

At the reception I was kidnapped by two boys and taken to Lodwar. They defiled me for two days. I was hurt in the process as I had tried to resist their attempts. My body had wounds all over and my clothes were bloody. The two boys were drug addicts and

they would inject themselves with a clear liquid and smoke bhang. All this happened in a small 'manyatta' in the outskirts of Lodwar town. The two males left and I took off. A Kenyan police reservist found me crying in one 'laga' and took me to the police station. The police accompanied me to the place where I was defiled but the young men had already vanished. I was then taken to the hospital where I was quickly introduced to HIV infection prevention drugs. At the hospital I met a family who knew me from Kakuma and they took me back with them in the car that had brought them to Lodwar. I was received by protection people of UNHCR and taken to a secret location where I am now happy and protected.

Early marriages and abuse of little girls only do more harm to girls than good. They took away my innocence but they cannot take away my future. I have now just completed my primary school education. No girl should go through what I went through. I want to be a lawyer to fight for the rights of girls like me or become a gynaecologist so that I can help women like me.



I SURVIVED, BUT THIS IS  
WHY NO ONE SHOULD  
RISK MARRYING EARLY

BY CHELIA ROSE

PHOTO: Aziza during  
our interview. By  
Otieno Samuel

**I**f I marry my daughter off at the age of 13 years, people from my community would respect me and praise me as a good woman," says Aziza. These are the words that opened our interview deep in the heart of Kakuma 3. Aziza Mohamed was married off at the early age of 16 years, denying her right to education which she strongly believes would have made a difference in her life. She is now 40 years and mother to 10 children, 3 of whom have passed on. She is now left with 3 boys and 4 girls.

Some 10 million girls a year are married off before the age of 18 across the world, according to a UNICEF report released this year. The effect of early marriage can be devastating for many with 90% of girls married before the age of 18 reporting to having been beaten by their spouses according to a study by The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). While India might be the most affected continent in the world, a handful of communities in the developing world still practice the vice.

'My aunt was married when she was only 13 years. She did not understand what was happening to her. Her bride price had been paid and the 27 year old man was ready to receive his bride,' recalls Aziza. The major cause of early marriage in developing countries is poverty. Many parents are willing to give their young ones out to men 3 times older for dowry. Girl's education is never given priority and when a wealthy man comes along and offers a few goats or gold or currency for the exchange for a child bride, parents look at it as a sacrifice too small to make for the good of the family.

"My aunt, being young and innocent would play with her friends and at night she would go back to her mother's house and sleep. Her mother would cook for her husband on her behalf and after she was asleep her 'husband' would carry her to his house and put her on his bed," says Aziza.

Some cultures may try to justify this violation to protecting their girls from becoming promiscuous. Many believe that by marrying their girls at a tender age usually before menstruation would protect them from becoming promiscuous and bringing shame to their family from unwanted pregnancies.

However, many women who are left to complete their education become important people and sometimes saviours of their family and community. There are more risks than benefits to child pregnancies with most of them having to experience high blood pressure, lack of parental care knowledge, premature birth, low birth weight babies, STDs and Postpartum depression.

She adds that her aunt got pregnant after her first menstrual cycle and this not only got her mother worried but the whole community as she was only 14 years. All the community could do was to wait and pray with many comforting her mother with words, telling her that God's will be done. Lema was taken to the hospital and after some medical tests and checkups, the doctors were optimistic.

While all this was happening, Azizah did not know that she would be next in line. When she turned 16 she was married off. Aziza, like many others in her community and age mates did not get a chance to education. A fact that she keeps battling with regrets. She however tries to go to school with every chance she gets and learn a thing or two. All her age mates' children are already married, but for her, she now knows the value of education. She admits that if she had a chance to make choices in her life, she would choose education over marriage.

Motherhood at a young age was challenging. She did not know what to do in marriage and no one was there to help her out. She is lucky enough to have survived but many other did not. Although most of her friends who were married off at her age have already married off their girls, Azizah is vowing to give her girls a chance to education. She wants the best for them and knows that a good education will secure them a better future.

She admits that if she had NOT been married earlier, she would have planned her life better and would be having a good job and contribute to building her family and provide them a better life. Aziza is dedicating her life and time to encourage people in her community to let their girls complete their education and will report anyone who tries to marry off their daughters before the age of 18 years to the agencies concerned.



**'If I marry my daughter off at the age of 13 years, people from my community would respect me and praise me as a good woman,'**

# A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON EARLY MARRIAGE



PHOTO: Caroline Jeptoo(Far right) and two of her colleagues

PHOTO By Josephat Ekiru

**E**arly marriages can be looked at from two perspectives, forced or willing. The psychological impact of both however will almost be the same in both marriages. Child marriages are traumatizing to the child and without psychosocial counselling and a change in environment the result can be devastating.

One third of the world's girls are married before the age of 18 and 1 in 9 are married before the age of 15. In this year alone, we have handled around 24 cases.

It is important to understand that Kakuma presents a different yet more complex situation compared to other parts of the world. The children here have undergone through so much traumatic experiences in their lives: Being forced to flee from their home country, some losing their parents, friends and relatives in the process,

and the hard life that Kakuma present to the young ones is traumatizing.

In Kakuma, most child marriages are culture based. Different nationalities have different sets of cultural practices that permit the marriage of girls as young as 11 years of age. These girls face a lot of psychological problems that may include withdrawal from society, some may grow to hate the male species, have feelings of loneliness, nightmares, hopelessness, and in some few cases the child may have or develop suicidal feelings. However, child marriage is not only restricted to the young girls but also young boys may be forced into early marriages for cultural reasons such as maintaining family ties with the partner families. Girls who marry before 18 are more likely to experience domestic violence than their peers who

marry later. A study conducted by the International Centre for Research on Women ICRW in two states in India found that girls who were married before 18 were twice as likely to report being beaten, slapped or threatened by their husbands than girls who married later.

In my two and a half years working in the Kakuma refugee camp, I have come across so many cases. Most of the survivors are those who have run away from their 'spouses' to come and find help. These survivors if not counselled and given a change of environment may become stressed and fall into a state of depression. 'There was a case of a girl who was married off after sitting for the Kenya Certificate for Primary Education. She managed to flee on the night of her wedding and come to us. We took her in and after

counselling her we secured her a place in one of the secondary schools where she began her form one studies. A few months down the line she realized that her body was not normal and so we took her to the medical facilities to have some tests performed.

In most cases the rescued girls are usually a few weeks or months pregnant. The medical risks associated with child pregnancies are immense. The little ones may not understand what is happening to their bodies at that time and the lack of education may also affect their response or need to get medical attention. Some may choose to hide at home while their bodies suffer until it's too late. A few may attempt to abort so that they can go back to school to get education after fleeing from their spouses. The situation becomes even worse when these girls give birth to a baby boy. In most African cultures where child marriages are practiced, and especially amongst the South Sudanese, more value is given to a girl child than a boy child as a girl child will 'repay' dowry paid for her mum in case anything goes wrong.

It is surprising that both sexes are involved in this vice. You would expect only men to be involved in propagating this harmful cultural practice but the involvement is 50/50 as women too are seen pushing for their children to get married at very early ages.

The solution to ending early child marriages is finding a behaviour and attitude change strategy that will involve a holistic approach to the vice by involving both female and male counterparts as well as efforts from all SGBV working groups.

*Caroline Jeptoo is the Safe Heaven Programme Coordinator for the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and is also a psychosocial counsellor.*

## MEDICAL FACTS ON EARLY MARRIAGE

[PHOTO: rescue.org]



**T**he effects of child pregnancies are immense. Child pregnancies are mostly a result of early marriage and apart from putting the child's life in grave danger, the child is affected psychologically and also their medical seeking behaviours are wanting.

Child pregnancies complications are linked to the child's body not being developed enough to contain a pregnancy. At 18 years, female body and mind is usually developed enough to successfully carry a pregnancy and deliver a healthy baby.

Among the risks associated with child pregnancy is the high risk of having an obstructed labour, a major cause of high maternal deaths and disability during birth. Obstructed labour may put both the mother's and the baby's lives at risk and is usually caused by an underdeveloped pelvis.

Having sexual intercourse at a very early age exposes girls to cervical cancer and other sexually transmitted infections. Most child marriages involve males who have had sexual intercourse with multiple partners and this exposes the child bride to HIV/ AIDs and other STIs.

Child marriages deny the young girls a chance to education and a good future. An educated wife will have a good health seeking behaviour as compared to one denied a chance to education. Poor health seeking behaviour may cause her to skip some important medical appointments and postnatal clinics for her child. An educated wife will be better off in taking care of her family.

Girls who marry before 18 are more likely to experience domestic violence than their peers who marry later. The mental maturity age for someone male or female to make good decisions is 18 years. Child brides often show signs symptomatic of sexual abuse and post-traumatic stress such as feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and severe depression.

When you are getting married, you would like to carry a baby at one point or the other. You can only be assured that you will have a healthy life and deliver a healthy baby when your body is matured at the age of 18 and over.

*Dr. Jesse Wambugu is the Clinical Services Manager at the International Rescue Committee (IRC)*



ONE ON ONE

# Nurturing Young Minds

Teacher Nelly, as she is commonly referred to by her students, is Angelina Jolie's Primary School SGBV Club teacher. She plays a key role in shaping the girl child's life in school. We talked to her about Early Marriage.

## **What is early marriage?**

Early marriage involves marrying off anyone who is under the age of 18 years, whether male or female. In most cases it is forced marriage.

## **Who are the most affected?**

The South Sudanese are usually the most affected. However every other girl between the ages of 11-17 is at the risk of early marriage.

## **What do you do as a club to stop these early marriages?**

We usually talk to the girls on the importance of a good education and the possibilities of bright futures that education provides. We make them understand that education is their right and no one should take that away from them. We also talk to the parents during parents' meetings on the importance of girl child education. We try to make them see that the girl will be of better help if she's educated and gets a good job.

## **Do the parents heed to your**

## **advice?**

Not all the parents are usually convinced but a good number understand and agree with us. Those who do not, usually think that they know better as parents of the girls.

## **What do you think are the causes of early marriage?**

The major cause of Early Marriage is poverty. A lot of poor parents will be enticed by the money paid as dowry. They see it as a gateway out of poverty and so they'll be willing to give their girls away. The other contributing factor may be culture. Some African communities are known to have been practicing early marriage for generations.

## **What should someone do when they are at risk of early marriage or if they know of a girl who is going to be married off?**

The girl or someone who knows of anyone who is going to be married

off as a child should not remain silent. They should report to the community leaders, the police, teachers or any agency for help. If it's a girl in school, she should go to the SGBV club teacher or any teacher and talk to them. The teachers will then report the matter to the Child Protection Offices who will take over the matter.

## **What advice do you have for parents who are thinking of marrying off their children before their 18th Birthday?**

Education is the key to success which will help one secure a good job in the future with a steady income. It is our key out of extreme poverty. A good job for your child will also give you as a parent a better life because it is our children who provide for us at old age. You may get the money now in terms of dowry but how long will that last compared to an employed child who is earning a steady income and supporting you fully at old age?

# RELIGION DOES NOT SUPPORT EARLY MARRIAGE



**CHANA ATUGEN ISMAIL**

One should only marry when they are capable of taking care of a family and fulfill their marriage duties. One should be mature enough. Christianity does not encourage forced marriages but points out that a marriage should be out of love and commitment to each other. It also does not specify an age when a man or woman should get married. In most if not all cases, early marriages are usually forced marriages which denies the girl child or boy child right to play and right to education.

Forced marriage is the major cause of

domestic violence since the two involved did not get time to learn about their partner nor get the chance to choose one. Here, they do not fully understand the other person and cannot reason together or find a common ground. Most men who marry children may view them as possessions and will definitely mistreat them.

My advice to men is that they should marry people who are mature enough. You can only be sure that you are marrying a mature person if they are above the age of 18 years.



**MOHAMED ABDUL KARIM**

I do not want to get married because of the challenges associated with early marriage. If I am to marry early then I would not be able to provide well for my family. I will also not be able to complete my schooling and I would not get a good job in future.

It is the same for the girl child too, as a girl who gets married early will not get a chance to complete her education. The lack of proper education is the cause of domestic violence simply because the two have no capacity to engage in meaningful discussions.

I plan to marry at the age of 30 or even later. By then I am sure to have completed my studies and put in place little measures that will ensure my family gets a good life that they deserve. For girls I would advise them to get married from 20 years and above.

I am a teacher at one of the primary schools in the camp. Early marriage is what keeps many in poverty. When you get married at an early age you will be forced to drop out of school hence you will never get a well paying job. If you are uneducated then you will lack even the basic knowledge of taking care of your family. I would advise my peers and those younger than me to go to school first and complete their education first.

Children should be left to mature on their own. You cannot force someone to mature. By marrying them off early this is most likely what you will be doing and the end result of that will be psychological torture or rather stress to the child.



**IKARIM ABUBAKAR**

I want to be a doctor or a teacher after school. The only way I can accomplish this is if I complete my education and pass my exams. Getting married at an early age will only prevent me from achieving my dreams.

I have friends who are my agemates and are married though they have not moved into their husband's house. We used to play together but nowadays we don't since they are expected to act more mature than their age. They live a miserable life.

If I could get a chance to talk to parents I would ask them to let their children complete their education and become important people in society first.



**MAKER AWAN**



**18** YEAR OLD

SINGLE  
MOTHER  
OF THREE

# THE EIGHTEEN YEAR OLD, SINGLE MOTHER OF THREE

**K**alekale is a refugee from Burundi. She was born in a family of 5. Her father was a long distance truck driver. War broke out and they had to flee. Her mother fled with two children and the father with one. She was left with her father as her mother and the two siblings fled to neighbouring Tanzania.

Then things got worse as her father passed on leaving her under the care of her aunt at the age of 11 years. Her aunt stayed in a town far away from her hometown and which had not been affected by insecurity. Here she was neglected; she stayed at home as her cousins went to school. She would stare at them as they picked their bags and run to school. All she could do was wish things would change for the better.

Her aunt who was a trader would leave her house every morning to go fend for the family. She was left at home with her uncle who would from time to time eye her. He took advantage of her innocence and sexually abused her for months. "One morning as my aunt had left, my uncle called me to his room and told me that I am a very beautiful girl," says Kalekale. "He would then put his hands on my chest and rub. I did not know what he was doing to me but I knew deep down that it was not right. He then told me that if I told anyone about what he was doing to me he would harm me," she continues with tears almost running down her cheeks.

An 11 year old in the hands of a sexual predator is unthinkable. She never mentioned this to her aunt and she took it for months. Things got worse...

"One morning he eyed me when my aunt was around. He asked my aunt to go to the market promising her that he would join her later. He then sent my cousins to play and called me to his bedroom. This time, he defiled me. I cried the whole day, I begged him not to but my cries went unheard," says

Kalekale. 'I could not tell my aunt for fear of what he might do to me. I was only 12 years,' she adds.

Days after the ordeal she still had pains in the lower parts of her body. It later came to be known that she had contracted an STI (sexually transmitted infection). She could not hide it for long as she had to battle with a body odour that was as a result of the STI. Her aunt after finding out she had an infection took her to hospital where she tested positive of an STI.

Her aunt scolded and hurled insults at her, calling her a spoilt girl who had no future and wanted to break her family. She then picked up a stick and threatened to beat her if she did not reveal who was responsible. Kalekale gathered enough courage from the insults hurled at her and told her aunt that the man responsible was her husband. The husband denied this and her aunt believed him. Her uncle forced her to tell another lie. She was forced to admit that she had a boyfriend who was responsible for the STI.

**I could not tell my aunt for fear of what he might do to me. I was only 12 years**

She was treated for the STI but things changed for the worse. Her aunt started mistreating her and called her a snake who wanted to destroy her family. She told the community and those who visited her that she was tired of taking care of a 'spoilt' girl and threatened to throw her out of her house.

Then came a 38 year old man who wanted her hand in marriage and her aunt gave her away. "I had hopes of getting an education but I had no option. My neighbours told me that life might be better in marriage. I was only 13 years old," says Kalekale. It is illegal in Burundi to marry anyone below the age of 18 years. Her husband then was an officer in the government and so they had to keep their marriage secret to avoid being arrested and charged.

Kalekale gave birth to a baby boy at 14 years of age. Her pregnancy and delivery was a complicated one.

I would have been a doctor or a teacher had I been given a chance to be educated. Now all I can do is to bring up my children in the best way possible everyday teaching them what is right and what is wrong

Although she gave birth naturally, her pelvic region was destroyed as her body had not yet matured enough to go through such an ordeal. She became paralysed from the waist below for some few weeks. The doctors then called her husband and counselled him. They explained that she had given birth at a very early age and that another pregnancy would put her life at risk.

Two and a half years later, she got pregnant. The second pregnancy also had complications. She fell sick many times and this affected her psychologically. Less than two years down the line she got pregnant with her third child. Like the two pregnancies before, she went through many other early pregnancy related complications. Things got worse and she lost her womb after delivering her third child. The doctor broke the news that shattered her world and told her that

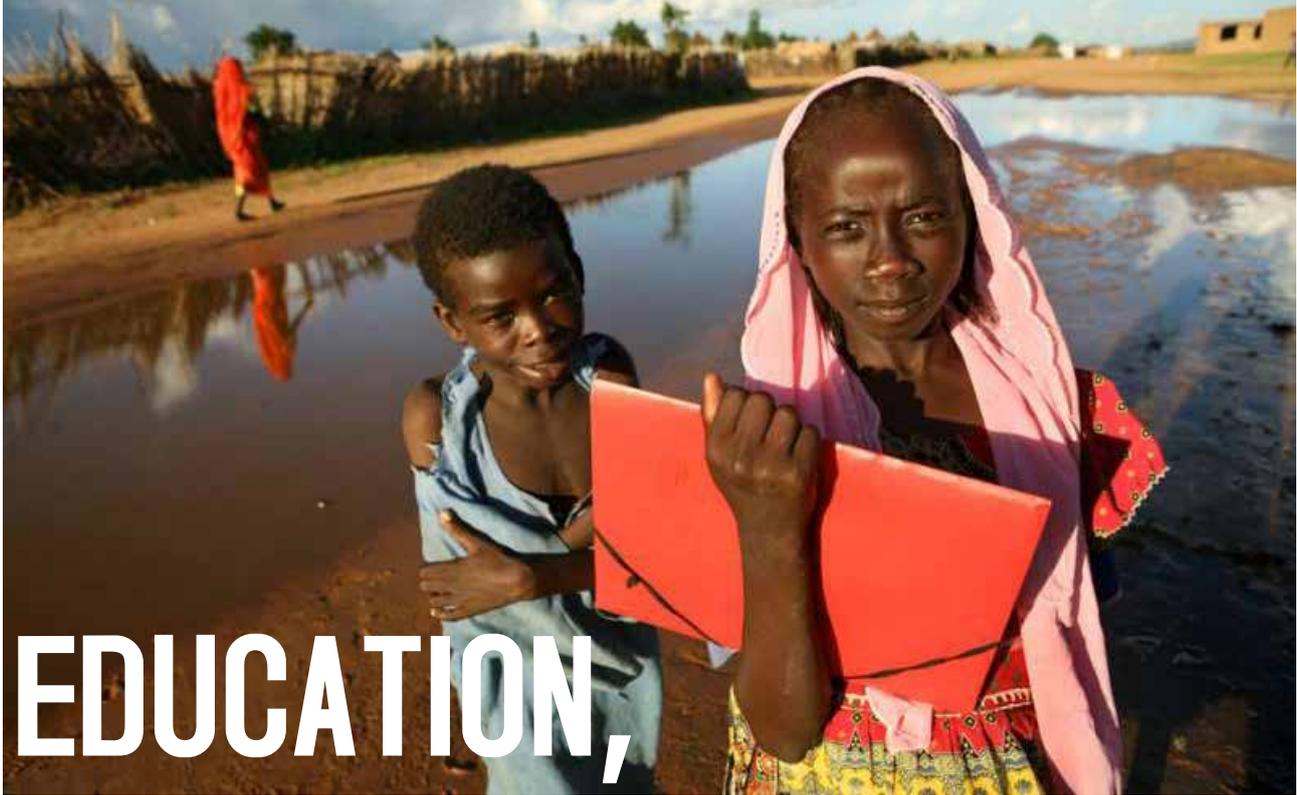
she will never give birth again.

The increasing level of insecurity back at home, Burundi, forced them to flee their country and come to Kakuma Refugee Camp. Her third born child was only 8 months then. They arrived in Kakuma through Uganda and settled with her husband for a few months before the husband left to go look for work never to return. She had to now fend for her three little ones. She looked for a job with one of the agencies operating in Kakuma though the incentive she is earning may not be enough, she is glad that she can put food on the table for her three boys.

“I would have been a doctor or a teacher had I been given a chance to be educated. Now all I can do is to bring up my children in the best way possible everyday teaching them what is right and what is wrong,” says Kalekale.



**1 IN 9 GIRLS  
IS FORCED INTO  
MARRIAGE  
BEFORE HER  
15<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY.**



# EDUCATION, NOT MARRIAGE

**17** year old Ijoga is a South Sudanese living in Kakuma refugee camp. Her story is that of survival and psychological resilience.

Ijoga was born in a poor family back in Sudan. She had a twin sister and were the only kids in her family. They lost their father when their mother was a few months pregnant. Ijoga is the older of the two twined girls. Like any other young girl coming into the world, they hoped for a better life.

She lost her mother when she was still young to a lung infection caused by tobacco smoking leaving her and her sister in the care of their grandmother. The grandmother worked hard to ensure that the two were enrolled in school. She did her best to give them the best life she could. Their uncle also promised to help out.

Her twin sister then started going out to parties at night when she was around 15 years old. This hurt their grandmother's feelings who

sat them down and advised them to go to school so that they could become important people in the future, but the younger sister did not take the advice. She continued with her life of night parties and bad company which ended with her getting pregnant.

The grandmother had no choice but to help take care of her granddaughter after the man responsible for the pregnancy denied responsibility. The pregnancy was not smooth as she was a minor. When the time came, she went into the delivery room and the doctors recommended birth through caesarean section. The grandmother had to look for money to pay the now soaring medical bills. She gave birth to a baby girl. Unfortunately, only the child made it out of the hospital.

After the burial of her granddaughter, the grandmother had to ask for money from the community to help her buy milk for the young one. Ijoga's uncle came home one day and told the

grandmother that the education she keeps insisting on is worthless and that Ijoga should get a husband. "I never thought he was serious until he came with this old man to my grandmother's place," says Ijoga.

Traditionally, and in many African cultures, the uncle became the father of the orphaned children after their father's death and for some, what the uncle says will be painfully final. After negotiations between the uncle and the old man who Ijoga describes to be old enough to be her grandfather, Ijoga was taken to the old man's home back in the north.

She was still a child and once in a while her childhood would take over her. She would go out to play with the man's children who were her age. The kids would laugh at her and mock her by calling her mama. This new life became confusing to her. She would then be forced to perform chores that a wife in traditional African society would be required to do. She had

to take care of children older than her but who called her mother. She would wash clothes and cook food and spend the night with her husband.

She got pregnant at the early age of 16 and even in her pregnancy she would be forced to do house chores. She then decided to go back to her grandmother in the South and her grandmother took her in. After 9 months she would walk into the same delivery room that her sister never made it out from and only hoped that things would be different for her. The doctors brought her the bad news that her body was not fully matured to give birth the natural way. She too had to give birth through caesarean. Her grandmother could only pray.

Unfortunately she is the only one who made it out of the hospital. She lost her baby boy in the same hospital she had lost her twin sister. After her son's funeral, she went back to her grandmother's home. She did not want to go back to her husband's home before her wound was healed but her husband wanted her back soon so that they could have another baby. Her uncle then threatened to send men to her grandmother's house to forcefully take her back to her husband and force her to sleep with him if she did not go back herself. This is a common practice among the south Sudanese and a

way to humiliate the young girls.

She went back to her husband's home but refused to sleep with him since her wounds were still hurting. After a few months she got news of her grandmother's illness and had to walk kilometres back to the South to see her. Her grandmother passed on and left her with her niece who was only a few months old. Her uncle wanted to take the niece away but Ijoga did not let him. Her experience in her uncle's hands could not let her give away the little angel to the beast that her uncle was. She then ran away with her niece who was now only a few months old. She met a friend in one of the streets in Juba who was selling tea at a roadside kiosk.

The friend had a young one too and they agreed that they would sell tea and take care of the babies in turns. War broke out in the South in December 2013 and she had to run with her niece. She used what she had made to get her to the Kenya Sudan Boarder and then found her way to Kakuma Refugee Camp.

On arrival she did not know anyone or where to start so she would beg for money which she used to buy milk for the young one. At one point a man wanted to forcefully take away her niece taking advantage of the fact that she only could speak her native

language. 'The man pulled my baby away from me and I screamed for help. But when people came he mumbled something to them in Swahili and some walked away while the remaining few just stood helplessly and watched as we fought for the young one,' she recalls.

"I did not know the man but the man claimed to know me," says Ijoga. Luckily the police came and she had to bring out her nieces birth certificate and some photos of the kid to prove that she was the kid's guardian. The man was arrested and locked for some time while Ijoga and her niece were then taken to the reception centre.

One day as she was going to get milk for the baby from a shop outside the reception centre she met the same man who had tried to take her baby away. The man physically abused her before the reception security could intervene. The man vanished into the camp prompting the UNHCR to take her into protection. She and her niece are now happy and safe.

'There is help for everyone who is going through a situation similar to mine. If you know anyone who is at risk please help them get help from the agencies,' urges Ijoga.



16 Days of  
ACTIVISM  
AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

*Promoting Rights and Preserving Childhoods*

**WORKING TOGETHER AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE**



**KAKUMA SGBV WORKING GROUP**





# SHE TOLD ME THAT SHE HAD PREPARED A HUSBAND FOR ME BACK AT MY HOME COUNTRY

BY CHELIA ROSE

I did not know what I would go through in the hands of my mother until that fateful day when my mother tied my legs with a rope and put me at the back of a vehicle to take me to an old man back in my country of origin. I can only hope that my little sister will not go through what I went through.

I have been living with my mother, a single parent, after the death of my father. We have lived in Kakuma for quite some time now and have seen the worst of life. My mother has been abusive. The knife scar on my feet and the scar on my little sister's head tells the story.

It all started when my mother hit my little sister's head with a blunt object almost slitting her head open. She bled and almost fell unconscious. My neighbours and I had to rush her to hospital. The doctor inquired what had happened and I told her what my mum had done. All this time I could not control the tears from my eyes. My mum came to hospital the next day and the doctors confronted her. This was not the first time one of her children was in hospital over physical abuse. I certainly hoped this would be the last. I was the first casualty of her anger. She had stabbed my feet with a knife leaving me with a permanent scar.

She became infuriated that we had told her off and stormed out of the hospital. I did not know what to do at this point as I watched her leave.

We stayed at the hospital for quite some time as we had no place to go back to and feared for the worst after her unceremonious walk out of the hospital. One of the hospital staffs was kind enough and took us to her home which was in our neighbourhood. A few days later my mum came for us. I could still see the anger in her eyes as we walked home. She told me that she had prepared a husband for me back at my home country. I could not believe it and hoped she was saying it out of anger.

The more I stayed with her and the more she kept telling me that, I knew something was amiss but I could not get my finger on it as I believed at that time that my own mother could not do something like that to me. Even though I still had her scars on me, marrying me off before my 18th birthday or without my consent would be extreme. My doubts did not last long until one day I found myself at the back of a vehicle heading to Sudan with my hands and legs tied like an animal, by my own mother.

I felt like a slave. I still cry about it every time I think of that

unfortunate day. One hour or so into our journey and the vehicle came to a stop. The police had stopped us at a road block at Kalobeiyei, a small centre between Lokichogio and Kakuma town in Turkana County, Kenya. The police saw me and they were shocked. They asked my mother where she was taking us and she told them that I had a husband waiting for me across the border and that dowry had already been paid. The police then took us back to Kakuma where I was handed to the UNHCR child protection services.

I am still worried for my little sister who is still living with my mother and hope that what happened to me will never happen to her. No girl should be put through such animosity. No girl is an object for sale.

I am now happy where I am and continuing with my education.

The story of Sheila (NOT HER REAL NAME) is shared by thousands of girls worldwide. She agreed to talk to us hoping that by publishing her story, someone out there will do something to stop child marriages and protect girls.

# I FIGHT FOR ALL GIRLS

HAWO YUSUF IS A SOMALI NATIONAL AND A BLOCK LEADER IN KAKUMA. SHE HAS DEDICATED HER LIFE AND VOICE TO FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHTS FOR GIRLS IN HER COMMUNITY

**H**awo Yusuf is a Somali national. She came to Kakuma refugee camp in the year 2007. The mother of two is also a block leader in the Somali community in Kakuma 1. To many who have interacted with her, she will be described as a warm hearted and dedicated leader. Coming from a community which once practiced FGM and early marriage, Hawo has seen it all.

She admits that the Somali people used to marry their girls off at the age of 15 although the number of early marriages is steadily dropping in Kakuma refugee camp, a fact with she attributes to the efforts made by the humanitarian agencies and some dedicated community members.

‘I was married at the age of 15 years like most of my peers. I had my first daughter when I was only 16 years of age and this did not come without risks,’ she says. She is a survivor but has witnessed a lot of young girls go through early marriage and pregnancy where a majority of them have ended up losing their ability to carry future pregnancies, lost babies, and some losing their lives during delivery.

“Early marriage denies our girls a chance to education and a good future,” says Hawo. A good education guarantees on a good job in future and with the job, one will be in a position to help other members of his/her family get better life. Hawo recalls that she has had to intervene in many cases of early marriage within her community. “Some parents will understand why it is wrong to marry of their young ones at an early age when we talk to them but others will not. For those who do not we have to report to the child protection offices,” says Hawo.

Taking care of girls should be the responsibility of the community as a whole and anyone who has information of a girl who is at risk of getting married should alert the authorities.



## CHILDREN ARE PROTECTED UNDER THE KENYAN LAW

BY CHELIA ROSE & DINAH MAKAMBI

**C**hild marriages are illegal under the Kenyan law. In Kenya a child is defined as anyone who has not attained the age of 18 years. Marriage is defined as the voluntary union of a man and a woman whether in a monogamous or polygamous union and registered in accordance with this Act.

The marriage ACT 2014 states the legal marriage age in Kenya to be 18 years old. Anyone who marries anyone below the age of 18 years will be charged in the courts of law and may be imprisoned to a jail term not exceeding 5 years. The sexual offences act stipulates that intercourse with a minor aged 11 and below may lead to life imprisonment.

Intercourse with a minor aged between 12-15 years may lead to sentencing of not less than 20 years imprisonment while intercourse with a minor aged 16-18 years will get not less than 16 years of imprisonment. It is important to remember that anyone who marries a child or anyone below the age of 18 years may be charged under the sexual offences ACT (if it is proven beyond reasonable doubt that sexual intercourse occurred or was intended) or charged under the Marriage ACT 2014, or both.

There is no standard procedure to be followed when reporting Early Marriage or SGBV cases. First, anyone with information or the victims can report to the nearest police station, sub-county children’s officer, community leader or any NGO staff that is around. The NGO and or community leader will then need to report the case to protection partners like the UNHCR, RCK, and LWF.

# I AM AFRAID HE MIGHT COME FOR ME

BY PASCAL ZIGASHANE



**G**lory (not her real name) is a South Sudanese living in Kakuma. She is now 22 years old and is a dedicated community worker. She arrived in Kakuma in the year 2002 with her mother and sister.

In 2007 just before she registered for her KCPE, she got a burn and could not walk to school to register for the critical KCPE exams. Her uncle went to school and registered her for the national exams. What they did not know is that the uncle had other selfish plans. He altered her age on the registration papers perhaps carefully planning for her marriage right after school. Glory only found out about this after school.

She sat for her KCPE in the same year and scored 286 marks out of the possible 500. She knew that with these marks her future looked promising. After the release of the exam results by the Kenyan Government that December, her uncle approached her and told her that the education she was pursuing was useless and that she had had enough of it. He told her that he wanted to marry her off to a wealthy man back in Sudan. Glory lived with her mother and sister, and the uncle like in many other African societies remained a

crucial father figure in the family. 'I have no wealth right now but I must get wealth through you,' said her uncle. Glory was a determined and she could not give away her love for education that easily.

The uncle then travelled back to South Sudan the same month. This was a relief to Glory as she hoped he would not come back but her hopes were short lived. The uncle came back and told her that he had already accepted dowry for her and that they would have to travel to South Sudan together so that he could deliver her to her new husband. At this point, Glory's mother had to intervene. She asked her in-law to let her 16 year old daughter complete her education first but her words fell on deaf ears. He then physically abused both Glory and her mum.

By this time Glory had gotten an admission to a Secondary School in Kakuma. She vividly remembers the planned date for their journey into marriage. "I knew he was going to take me by force," says Glory. In 2008 there were no block leaders and in their place were the group leaders. Glory and the mum reported the case to their group leader. Word got to the uncle that he had been reported to the group leader and he

## NOW THAT YOUR MOTHER IS NO MORE, I WILL COME FOR YOU AND YOUR SISTER AND MARRY YOU OFF TOGETHER WITH YOUR NIECE, NO ONE WILL STOP ME...

stormed into the group leader's compound and threatened him. He told him that the planned date for their travel was 21st May 2008 and that if he was man enough he could try stopping him.

The group leader then approached another group leader who was in charge of gender. They advised her to leave their compound before that day. When the day approached the uncle came to her mother's home and started parking her clothes. The mother would then unpack the clothes and the uncle would angrily park them again. Glory fled to Kakuma 1 phase two that evening but her uncle somehow managed to track her there. On realizing this, Glory went to Kakuma one but the uncle was still on her tail. The uncle followed her there and she had to run back to phase two. By this time she knew that it would soon be morning and she had to find a place to hide. She went to field post 1 and asked the gate man to let her sleep there.

At 6am, the gate man told her that he did not want trouble with her family. He advised her to go to the LWF compound which was better secured and where she could get help. At the LWF gate, the security officers did not let her in. She stayed at the gate for some time until her uncle followed her there. She pointed the uncle to the security officers. The security hid her under the table as the man tried to grab her hand. The security went in to call the gender officers and the uncle took off. He knew he had rubbed the wrong shoulder with the law and so he fled to South Sudan. Glory then told her story to the Gender Officer at LWF and she was taken to a safe facility.

In 2009 rumours got to her

uncle that she was back into the community. He travelled from Sudan to Kakuma hoping to collect his treasure. He did not find her at their home and instead he physically abused her mother accusing her of letting her daughter flee. All this time, Glory was at the safe facility and did not know that her mother had been abused by her uncle. The mother reported the incident and he again fled to South Sudan. Glory was lucky enough to go to School outside Kakuma for her form one after receiving yet another scholarship.

In 2010 the uncle came back. This time he came back for Glory's sister who had just completed her primary school. He told her that he would not allow himself to become poor again and that he had already consumed the dowry paid for Glory and so he would have to take Glory's sister to South Sudan instead. This was shocking to both Glory's mother and her little sister who like Glory preferred a good education to marriage. Glory's mother reported the matter again to the gender office. The uncle again got word of this and fled to Sudan.

In 2011 she completed her secondary education. Her sister was also lucky to be sponsored to the same secondary school that Glory had gone through outside Kakuma, keeping her safe from her uncle for quite some time. After school Glory decided to go back to Kakuma to stay with her mother. At this time her mother's leg had a wound that was getting bigger and bigger despite being treated at the main hospital for a long time. She was there for her mother just in the same way she stood for her. In September 2013, the worst happened and her mother passed

away.

Word got to the uncle back in Sudan and the uncle got her mobile number and called her pretending to be her long lost cousin from back home. Glory confirmed to him that indeed her mother had passed on before the uncle revealed his real identity to her. "Now that your mother is no more, I will come for you and your sister and marry you off together with your niece, no one will stop me," said the uncle. Glory was the older one and had to protect her little sister and niece after their mum had passed on. She reported the incident to the UNHCR protection immediately.

In December 2013 the uncle came back with the influx of refugees after war broke out in South Sudan. He told them that he would take all of them to South Sudan once he gets enough money to transport them. To date, the uncle has not come back for them but she is still worried that one day he will show up.

She has currently dedicated her time to serving the most vulnerable in the community. She knows too well how the world looks for thousands of young innocent girls who are at risk of early marriage or who are being abused by their guardians. Her hope is that one day the world will come together to protect all the children regardless of their gender, race or age.

There is help for everyone. If you are in a similar situation or know anyone who is at risk, help them get a better future, help them get help by reporting to LWF, UNHCR, or other agencies working in Kakuma.



SURVIVOR

## A SECOND CHANCE

I come from a very large family. My father is polygamous. I am the eldest of my mother's 5 children. My mother passed on when we were still very young. We arrived in Kakuma in the year 2011 where I joined class three. We came to Kakuma from my country of origin. My family was not well off and we went through a very hard life.

We had no uniform to wear to school and the teacher would send us away once in a while. We did not know Swahili language and could only speak in mother tongue. At first we did not understand what the teacher was teaching but we all held on hoping one day we would. School was the only place we wanted to be. The food given to us was not enough and we went to school hungry most of the time. School life was becoming unbearable for me and my siblings. My father gave us his all. He would come to school to talk to the headmaster to let us stay whenever we were sent home because of school uniforms and sometimes hair. He is a dedicated father who wants the best for all his children.

Two of my step sisters decided to get married as school life became harder and harder in the year 2012. They were barely 16 years old and my father had no choice but to grant them their wishes. However, one of my sister's husband went to the US for resettlement abandoning my sister and her child. Their marriage was not a happy one as most of the time my sister would run back home after being physically abused by the husband. Her husband would also hurl insults at my father after a fight with my sister. The other had a lucky marriage and is happily married with one kid though she had complications during delivery.

I remained in school, but not for long. I also decided to get married in 2014 as my father could not provide everything that I needed. I thought marriage was the only way out of this miserable life that I was living and felt I did not have enough strength to carry on. I got a husband and got married. I was only 17 years old. Life got tougher with married life. He would lock his house when I went to school and take the key with him. He did not give me any food and I had to depend on the food given to us at school. When I got home at 4 from school he would ask why I didn't go back home at 1 and he would call me a prostitute. He would also physically abuse me. I wanted to play with friends and have some childhood time with them but he did not let me. He would physically abuse me instead. 2 months after marriage my husband forced me to drop out of school.

One day I ran home to my father and told him that all I wanted was to go to school but my husband would not let me. My father then talked to my husband and he promised to change so I went back with him to his house. After a few days he was at it again. He did not let me go to school and always locked me out when I left the house to see a friend. I regretted the decision I had made.

All I wanted was education and all I was getting was violence and emotional torture. I was advised to go and talk to Windle Trust for help and they took me to protection where I am now happy. I am in standard six and I hope to become a teacher after completing my studies.



I have two daughters whom I will never allow to marry when they are under the age of 18



**SHEIKH MOHAMED ALI IS THE IMAM OF A MOSQUE IN KAKUMA. HE IS ALSO A FATHER OF 2 GIRLS AND 3 BOYS. OUR REPORTER DAWIT EJIGU INTERVIEWED HIM ON EARLY MARRIAGE AND THESE WERE HIS THOUGHTS.**

**What does religion says about early or forced marriage?**

Naturally it is not possible to start a family without love and willingness from both couples; if one of them is not willing to do so, the life of that family will definitely fall under big temptation. Usually such kinds of things occur to forced marriages. Islam does not support those things; as a religion it strongly opposes forced marriage and especially for those who are under age.

**According to you what is the right age for a girl or a boy to be married?**

In Islam it is indicated that a girl is fit for marriage after she begins her menstrual cycle; this usually happens at the age of 15. But

in my opinion, at the age of 15 the girl is not mature enough emotionally, psychologically and even physically. So I suggest 18, 19, or 20 and more if possible at which everyone can take responsibility for a family. I have two daughters whom I will never allow to marry when they are under the age of 18.

**What are the effects of early marriage for a girl?**

When a girl marries when she is under age, she may face different problems. Since her is not mature enough she may get really hurt during intercourse and during the period of pregnancy. She may also suffer emotional (sic) tension and stress as she tries to figure out how to handle a family or husband. Child pregnancies also have health implications such as fistula, paralysis, damage to the womb and so many more. If the child is unlucky she may also lose her life during delivery.

**How does the Community/ congregation perceive early marriage?**

Our congregation knows early marriage as something harmful for everyone. So it is that way we know about this from the experience we have seen.

**If you were to do something different to your community in regards to early marriage what would it be?**

Usually in Islam girls are proposed for marriage at the age of 15, but most girls do not move into the husband to be home immediately. The man has to then go and prepare a home for his wife to be. This usually takes 2-3 years and before then the girl would have matured enough for marriage. This is what I am promoting in my community as I have seen it to be very helpful. Secondly we also inform everyone about forced marriage; which includes marriages among blood relatives. Marrying your relative will have so many problems some of which are biological, in which bad traits may be passed on to new generations. It will also be hard for other people to come in and help in case the family faces problems.

## 25TH NOVEMBER 2014,

### INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

25 November was declared as a day for the elimination of violence against women by the first Feminist Encuentro for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Bogota, Colombia, 18 to 21 July 1981. It originally marked the day that the three Mirabal sisters from the Dominican Republic were violently assassinated in 1960 during the Trujillo dictatorship (Rafael Trujillo 1930-1961).

This year, UNHCR's focus in Kakuma will be on;

'Protecting Rights and Preserving Childhoods: Working Together to Address Child Marriage.

## 1st DECEMBER

### WORLD AIDS DAY

World AIDS Day is celebrated around the world on December 1st each year. It has become one of the most recognized international health days and a key opportunity to raise awareness, commemorate those who have passed on, and celebrate victories, such as increased access to treatment and prevention services.

## 2ND DECEMBER

### INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

Slavery has evolved and manifested itself in different ways throughout history. Today some traditional forms of slavery still persist in their earlier forms, while others have been transformed into new ones. The UN human rights bodies have documented the persistence of old forms of slavery that are embedded in traditional beliefs and customs. These forms of slavery are the result of long-standing discrimination against the most vulnerable groups in societies, such as those regarded as being of low caste, tribal minorities and indigenous peoples.

*Key areas include ;  
Forced Labour  
Child Labour  
Human Trafficking*

## 3RD DECEMBER 2014, WORLD DISABILITY DAY

International Day of People with Disability (December 3) is an international observance promoted by the United Nations since 1992. It has been celebrated with varying degrees of success around the planet. The observance of the Day aims to promote an understanding

of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life. It was originally called "International Day of Disabled Persons

## 10TH DECEMBER

### INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

The UN General Assembly proclaimed 10 December as Human Rights Day in 1950, to bring to the attention 'of the peoples of the world' the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.

This year's event will be marked at Napata ground

**SGBV HOTLINE**  
**0710 555 111**  
CALL FOR HELP



## KAKUMA SGBV WORKING GROUP





**HAVE**  
YOUR **ARTICLES**  
**PUBLISHED**  
ON OUR **NEXT**  
**PUBLICATION**

E-mail Us on [therefugeekak@gmail.com](mailto:therefugeekak@gmail.com)



**BPRM** A gift of the  
US Government

Views expressed in this publication do not reflect those of FilmAid, UNHCR, or BPRM.