

World Vision



# Girls on the move

A publication about girls escaping  
natural disasters and violent conflict  
in Eastern Africa

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World Vision is a global Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice.

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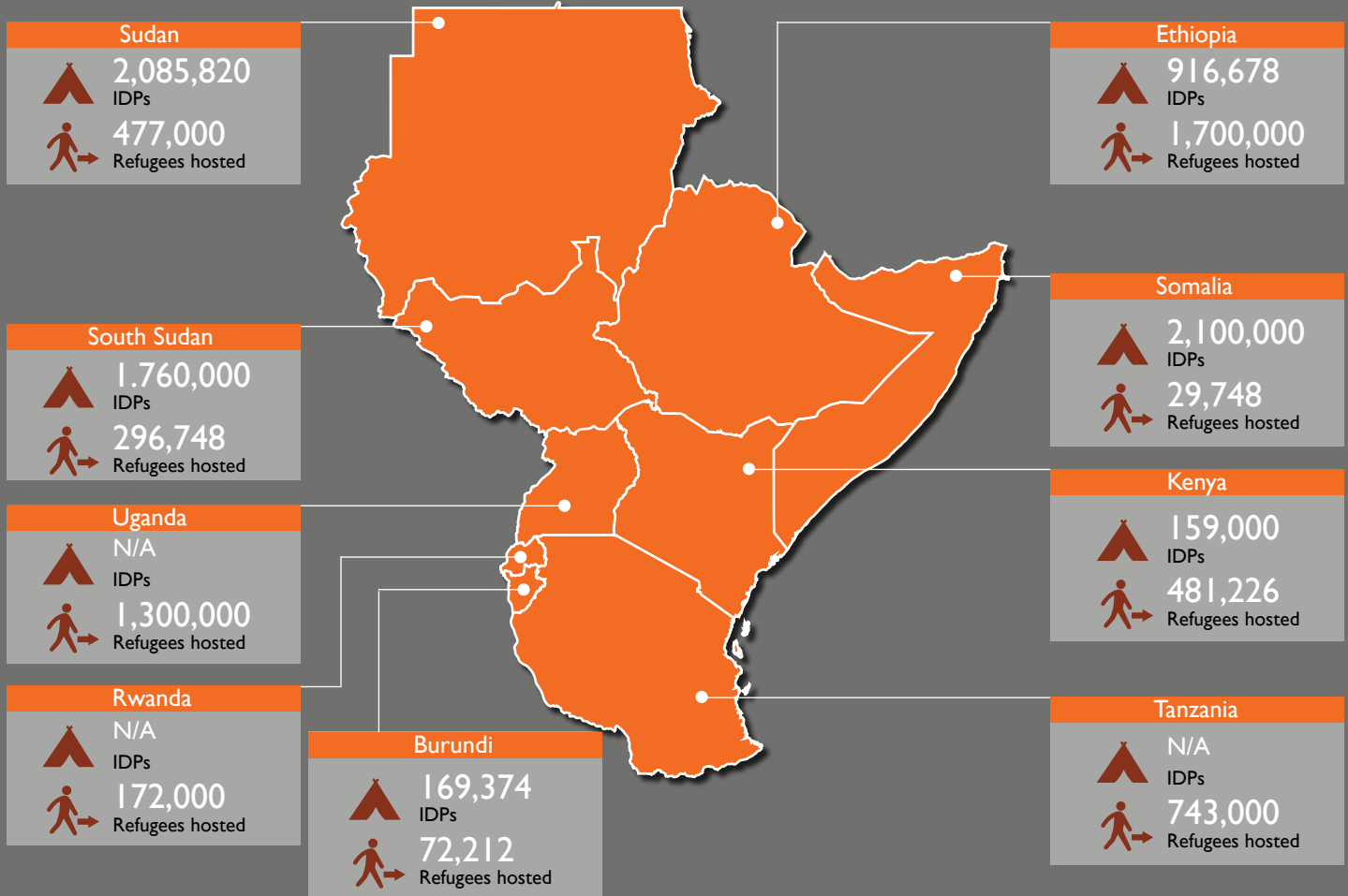
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# DISPLACEMENT IN EAST AFRICA



Sources: UNHCR, UNOCHA

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## REGIONAL LEADER'S FOREWORD

Children are on the move. Today, nearly 50 million children have migrated across borders or been forcibly displaced in many parts of the world.

For the first time since World War II, the world is seeing the highest global levels of forced displacement pushing more and more children out of their homes and communities, escaping the violence of war and conflict, only to fall vulnerable to other forms of violence: use and recruitment by armed groups, sexual abuse, trafficking, labour or child marriage.

Every day and in every region, these children on the move face a variety of rights violations, from exploitation and violence to being separated from their families, detained because of their migration status and deprived of essential protections and services.

In the East Africa region, it is estimated that over 5 million children, half of them girls are on the move due to drought, famine, political unrest and conflicts. It comes as no surprise that 3 of the top 10 countries hosting the largest number of refugees in the world are in East Africa – Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.

World Vision is deeply concerned that the traumas of war, forced displacement and natural disasters leave children especially vulnerable, stripping away their normal safeguards, placing them in situations of high risk, abuse or exploitation, and often spurring continuing cycles of fear and aggression.

It is due to this concern that World Vision launched a global campaign to end all forms of violence in 2017 – dubbed 'It Takes a World to End Violence Against Children'. In humanitarian and fragile contexts, the campaign will focus on advocacy to end all the forms of violence that children experience while on the move, including sexual abuse and rape, abduction, recruitment into armed groups and child trafficking.

Our significant global experience in humanitarian response, community development and advocacy for children places World Vision in a unique position to contribute to the well-being of displaced children who are often the most vulnerable, especially in fragile and humanitarian contexts.

Our campaign is focusing on igniting global movements for, with and by children to catalyse global, regional and national changes in attitudes, raise awareness and drive both courageous and effective change for children.

The time is now...

To fully meet the needs of children on the move, World Vision's work is guided by the following key principles:

- Investing in resilience and sustainable development outcomes to address the structural causes of forced displacement, including timely and effective political solutions to prevent and resolve conflict
- Prioritising and strengthening protection measures for children on the move
- Developing and expanding policies to support self-reliance and mutual benefit between the forcibly displaced and host communities, and providing the necessary funding for implementation
- Partnering with multi-stakeholder groups, including those within displaced populations and hosting communities, to develop context-appropriate durable solutions to protracted displacement, including returns

It takes a world ...

The world's governments have set ambitious targets to end violence by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Every child has the right to grow up free from violence and the Global Compact for Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration must reflect this.

Our efforts as one organisation will not yield much if we work alone. As the saying goes, 'it takes a village to raise a child', World Vision strongly believe that it will take the world – each and every one of us – to end all forms of violence against children.

The time to come together is now, to build and strengthen child protection systems that will ensure no child is forced to leave home to seek refuge in another community or country. From the private sector, to the community and faith leaders; each one of us has a chance to step up and protect children. It will require courage to address the political ideologies that divide us and trigger conflict; it will take a strong message of solidarity from the pulpits to shift the mindsets that drive violence; it will take a bold statement to break the silence that perpetuates violence – it will take you, and me doing something to end violence against our children.

Will you join us?

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**Stephen Omollo**  
Regional Leader-East Africa Regional Office



## ADVOCACY DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

"It only takes a spark, to get the fire going..."

The words of this old hymn come to my mind every time I think of the number of children and families on the move. I have often wondered whether the person that set the spark off – that triggered a conflict or escalated tensions in communities – had any idea how destructive that spark would be as it uproots families and children from their day to day routines, altering their futures forever.

*Just one child victim of violence is one too many. Yet, the most recent global estimate shows that 1.7 billion children – over half of all children in the world – experience some form of violence each year."* – *Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (SRSG)*

Many children, girls in particular, face violence when they are forced to leave their homes.

Children on the move are among those experiencing violence, child marriage, sexual exploitation and abuse, rape, abduction, slavery, forced recruitment into armed groups, among other atrocities children face. They are often unaccompanied, and girls on the move often take on the role of being a parent to their younger siblings at a time when they too need parental love and protection.

Yet, this could be me, or you, on the move. Uprooted from a comfortable life without warning, driven to abject poverty and destitution in the blink of an eye.

Children on the move are forgotten once the cameras leave the scene. These children face so many unknowns. They require support, and affirmative action. We need to make every effort to protect them.

We have to take action, today and every day, to bring an end to violence against children.

As individuals, we can take a stand. Be the voice of the voiceless, speak out and demand that a child abuser is brought to justice.

As a community, we can create and support systems and structures that provide safety and protection for the children.

We have a duty to protect our own children, and we have a moral obligation to protect the children in our midst from all forms of violence. The old African adage - it takes a village to raise a child – still rings true, yet how many times have we looked the other way when we know a child is experiencing abuse?

*"The human dignity of children and their right to protection from violence is not just common sense and basic morality; it is an international legal obligation, as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child."* – *Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (SRSG)*

As voters, we can demand that our policy makers take action – increase the capacity of our law enforcement agencies to deal with cases of child abuse and violence with dignity and professionalism, and ensure justice is served.

Children on the move – girls on the move, can seem like a far-off phenomenon that affects other children, in other countries with conflict and hunger and famine.

May the stories in this publication remind us and stir us to act, to speak out for children on the move. Join our campaign today, to end all forms of violence against children.

It takes a world, to end violence against children. Remember, it only takes a spark...

**Brenda Kariuki**

*Regional Advocacy & External Engagement Director*



GIRLS ON THE MOVE IN THE

# HORN OF AFRICA

## NATURAL DISASTERS MAKING GIRLS HOMELESS, INCREASES THEIR VULNERABILITY

**T**he Horn of Africa has been hit by a series of natural disasters during the last two years. In 2017, a widespread drought affected millions of families in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya. In 2018, many of the same areas – which had not rebounded yet – were affected by devastating floods. The subsequent natural disasters have forced more than 2 million people to abandon their homes. For girls in particular, natural disasters can lead to devastation that lasts a lifetime.

“Natural disasters lead to an increase in the vulnerability children face. Girls specifically are at a higher risk of dropping out of school, partaking in child labour, being married early, being sexually exploited, becoming pregnant and finding other negative coping mechanisms. After natural disasters, we often see an increase in the numbers of children on the streets who left their homes to seek livelihood opportunities in towns and cities,” says Tina Berwa Ojuka, World Vision’s Technical Advisor on Child Protection and Participation, based in East Africa.

Eight-year-old Lochero witnessed 180 of her family’s goats starve to death last year after rain failed, grass withered and water points dried up due to drought. Forced to abandon their

way of life, Lochero followed her mother and two younger siblings to the nearest urban centre.

In Kakuma, in northern Kenya, Lochero and her mother set up a tiny hut made of branches and mud on the outskirts of an 180,000-person refugee camp. Lochero’s mother Monica begged the refugees to buy bundles of thorn branches in return for a cup full of maize meal to feed her children at night. Every morning, Lochero was left to care for her five-year-old sister and one-year-old brother while Monica left to hack thorn trees from the bush and bring them to the refugee camp.

“I hate the way we live as a family,” Lochero said. “I tell my mother every day that I want to go to school, but she tells me ‘who will take of my brother and sister?’”

Some months later, in another part of Kenya, girls like 16-year-old Peninah struggled after a flash flood destroyed communities.

“After 30 minutes, our house had been swept away by the flood waters,” Peninah remembers.

Their family's crops were destroyed and all their belongings lost – leaving Peninah and thousands of other girls wondering what they would eat, where they would sleep and how they would continue to stay in school in the months to come.

Drought in Somaliland has created similar hardships for girls. Seven-year-old Fardawsa and her mother were forced to abandon their home and move to a settlement for displaced people. Fardawsa and her mother scraped together a few branches to create a makeshift shelter, but relied on handouts from their neighbours for food. Even with rain, months later, all means were exhausted for recovery.

Without any income, Fardawsa can't start her education either. The cost of a simple notebook or a school uniform is too expensive for a family that has lost everything.

"Nothing is worse than being a displaced family," says Fardawsa's mother Hinda.

In Ethiopia, failed crops led 15-year-old Nejuma to drop out of school.

"I had to support my mother with some house chores because

my father went in search of daily labour," Nejuma says.

Keeping girls from school or forcing them to drop out before they have finished primary school greatly increases the chances that the cycle of poverty will be passed on to the next generation, Tina warns.

"When girls go to school and finish their education, they have more self confidence. Research has proven that girls who are educated are more economically productive, healthier and safer, which disrupts poverty from being passed down to the next generation," says Tina.

World Vision has responded to the needs of people affected by drought and flooding in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia and helped reduce the impact on farmers and pastoralists by giving them the skills and support to keep their animals alive and crops growing. Drought-affected children are also supported to stay in school through the distribution of school supplies and provision of daily school meals.

"Still, there's more to do. We need to ensure families have the ability to survive crises and have income so that their children's lives are not disrupted and devastated," Tina says.

## GIRLS WHO SURVIVE NATURAL DISASTERS OFTEN REQUIRE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Many children who survive natural disasters have experienced loss – the death of a family member or the loss of their home and are forced to adapt to a new environment. Often, children who have experienced such changes experience shock and, then, grief, says Eva Kathoni Nyagah, a psychologist working at World Vision in Kenya.

"Normally people have a certain way of living, they have some trust in the environment. But when something like that happens it's like they do not know what is going to happen anymore, they are not feeling safe," Eva says.

Wanjiru recently survived a flash flood that inundated her community, washing away homes, destroying classrooms and shops and killing dozens of people.

"We had to escape immediately. We left our food and ran out of the house," Wanjiru remembers.

Wanjiru's mother was one of the people caught in the flooding.

"We received the blow," Wanjiru says when she remembers the phone call that informed her family that their mother's body had been found under mud after some of the water receded.

Hundreds of other children have faced similar tragedies in the wake of natural disasters across the Horn of Africa.

"Children say they actually have difficulties getting back to their reality, the normal they had before. Most of the time it takes years to get back to reality for children," Eva says.

To help usher children through distressing moments, Eva states more attention needs to be placed on providing psychological first aid in the aftermath of a disaster, and – in the longer term – having activities that provide psychosocial support for children that can include art therapy or play therapy so that children can express their emotions and re-establish a sense of normalcy. In other cases, children may require counseling.

"It takes time. What you do is sit there, show the human bond, you know some people just want to feel that people care. Be human, be honest, provide information, be there, just be there," Eva concludes.





GIRLS ON THE MOVE IN

# BURUNDI

## WHEN THEY COME BACK: REFUGEE RETURNEES NEED SUPPORT

**O**n a bright November afternoon, busloads full of passengers returning home arrive at a refugee processing centre. They're excited, after years of living outside their homeland, they're back and ready to restart life in Burundi.

World Vision met three girls who explained the challenges they faced while away, and what they hoped for back in Burundi.

### **Jehovanise, 16**

"As a girl, we really missed sanitary clothes. We had no means to buy them. It was a very big challenge for us. Sometimes it was three or four days without going to school because of this. What we had to use were pieces of cloth. After using it, we just threw them away and were obliged to look for other pieces."

### **Diane, 15**

"We were borrowing money from people who had small businesses. We'd give the money back by selling some of our

food ration. But then they cut the food ration and what we used to get for two weeks, we now got for one month."

### **Rebecca, 15**

"After we realised life was becoming harder, we decided to come home. I feel happy to be back here."

"We will do farming. We have a plot of land. I'll grow beans and rice. Our house was destroyed after we left though, so it will take time for us to build a new one. We'll have to stay with relatives in the meantime."

### **Need for assistance for returnees**

Restarting their lives in Burundi will require support. World Vision is highlighting the need for projects that facilitate peacebuilding, create community cohesion, enable access to education, provide psychosocial support, offer agricultural support and provide skills training to ensure people can earn an income.





GIRLS ON THE MOVE IN THE

# D. R. CONGO

## EMOTIONAL DISTRESS HAUNTS GIRLS FLEEING SCENES OF VIOLENCE

**W**e came here after they killed our father. They came into our house before dawn, and cut off his head,” remembers 15-year-old Mputu.

“After they killed him, we fled.”

Mputu ran from the violence in Kasai Centrale province with her 11-year-old sister Bakandi. Their neighbours scraped together a little money to put the girls in a car and send them to a safe zone some 500 km away.

“It took us three days on the road,” Mputu says.

“Even though they’d sent us money to take a car, we were stressed as we travelled through other communities. We weren’t happy, we were scared. We didn’t take anything with us when we left.”

Mputu and Bakandi are among more than a million people who have fled violence in the Grand Kasais since August 2016. Children have witnessed their parents being killed and homes

being burnt. Like many other children, Mputu and Bakandi have been taken in by their extended families, who often struggle to care for the extra mouths.

The financial constraints have limited the food the girls eat and forced the sisters to drop out of primary school.

Children affected by conflict require psychosocial support to address violence, integrate and adjust to their new surroundings.

### How are girls affected differently than boys?

“Both boys and girls are affected by the conflict, however, girls are more vulnerable as in some cases, they are also used as sexual slaves once caught in the middle of a conflict,” says Clarisse Kasaza, a World Vision child protection specialist.

“More programmes are needed to ensure girls are protected and can revive and restart their lives,” she adds.



GIRLS ON THE MOVE IN

# ETHIOPIA

## EDUCATION IS THE ONLY WAY OUT FROM REFUGEE LIFE

**Y**ear after year the number of refugees has been increasing worldwide. The conflict in South Sudan has forced 2.5 million people to flee the country. It is Africa's worst crisis and has produced the most number of refugees on the continent. More than 60 per cent of those refugees are children.

For girls, getting an education is a continued desire when they flee their homeland, but it's often not realised in the countries bordering South Sudan.

Seventeen-year-old Nyaruot Reath is from Akobo in Jonglei County of South Sudan. She, along with three of her siblings and stepmother, fled to the Gambella region of Ethiopia in 2014 after fighting broke out in her country.

"It was my first time to have this kind of journey and the hardest I have ever had. There was no water to drink, no food to eat. The other little children and I became so weak and fainted after walking such a long distances. Above all, the saddest and most painful incident was that a three-year-old child of my older brother drowned while we were crossing Akobo River by boat near the border of Ethiopia. We buried

him in Buribiye," she remembers. After a week-long journey Nyaruot and her family arrived in Gambella. They started living as refugees in Jewi camp.

"Refugee life is the worst life. I never imagined I would be a refugee. I don't like this refugee life but I am forced to live it," she explains with sorrow.

Yet, Nyaruot has been fortunate. While many children have been forced to drop out of school when they became refugees, Nyaruot has been able to continue with her education.

"My seemingly dead hope has got life. I can see there is a better life ahead that I will realise one day," Nyaruot says.

Despite Nyaruot's energy and thirst for education things are not easy in Jewi camp. She is responsible to undertake a number of house hold chores after school.

"I have to fetch water, cook food for the family, wash clothes and take care of my younger siblings. As a result I couldn't perform in my education as I did in Akobo," Nyaruot shares.

But she is committed to clawing her way out of refugee life.

“I have a dream to change my life, my family and my country. Education is the only way out,” Nyaruot says.

World Vision supports nearly 1,500 South Sudanese refugee students in Gambella to continue their education. While it's a start, much more support is required to ensure refugee children are able to continue their education in refugee communities throughout Ethiopia and Africa.

“From South Sudan ‘two-thirds of refugee children between the ages of 3 and 17 are not enrolled in school’ - UNHCR, South Sudan Situation, Supplementary Appeal, 2017

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**84%** of the world's adolescents attend secondary school



only **23%** of refugee adolescents attend secondary school





## GIRLS ON THE MOVE IN **KENYA**

### **RUNNING FROM RAPE, FORCED MARRIAGE**

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**I** was the last to be born in my family. My parents passed away and my older brothers helped raise me. We were farmers, we lived in a village. I went to school, until Grade 6, says 18-year old Faida,\* recounting the situation before she became a refugee in Kenya.

“When I was 15, there was an attack on our village. The guys came at night. They were firing guns all over. It was 9 o’clock at night. They came to my house and took me. There were so many other girls also captured at that time.

“He took me into the forest. I was forced, I was raped. Those girls who refused, they killed them.

“I was ‘married’ for two years. He had two other wives as well. We lived in the forest. There was no house, no structure. We just slept on the ground, with the mosquitos and wild animals. Life was very difficult. My life became one of troubles and sickness. I suffered a lot, I was not happy, I was thinking of taking my life.

“I had a baby, there in the forest. I called her Gloria. I loved her.

“My husband was a rebel. He often left home to fight. Life started to defeat me. I started to think of ways to get out, to escape.

“One day when I was picking wild vegetables, I met another woman from a nearby village. She understood I was in trouble. I told her my story. She showed me a path to escape, to reach Burundi if I kept walking. We weren’t too far from the border. It was possible.

“No one was home when I returned. I decided to surrender my baby to my neighbours. She was 2 years old at that time and just finishing breastfeeding. I hoped that my older brothers would be able to get her in the future.

“I took to the road and I ran. I ran until I reached Luvungi, the border of Burundi. I stayed in Burundi for a few days and then heard that my husband had sent a team to look for me, to find my hideout.

“I had a bit of money and boarded a bus for Uganda. When I arrived there, I was confused. I met another woman there.

She listened to my story and then told me to go to Kakuma, in Kenya. She told me there were other women from my country there. She gave me money to pay for the bus fare.

“In total, it took me three weeks from leaving Congo to reach Kenya. When I arrived here, I was lucky to meet an old friend of mine who had also escaped. She invited me to live in her home.

“I miss my baby. I want to see her again. I want her to live here. I talked to my neighbours on the phone. They told me she’s okay.

*Sexual violence is causing serious trauma and health problems, sometimes leading to pregnancies involving girls” - UNHCR Protecting refugee women: promoting gender equality, 2011*

“I’m lucky to be here, I’m lucky to get food from the centre. I’m safe here. My friend and I help each other. For the little food we get, we thank God.

“I’m learning to plait hair. I am hoping this becomes my work in the future. I don’t have any other help, no other aid, we’re just alone.”

Faida is one of thousands of children who have endured sexual gender based violence. According to UNHCR, thousands of girls who are displaced from their homes because of conflict endure sexual violence before the age of 18.

World Vision joins a chorus of international actors in calling for sufficient funding to prevent, intervene and respond to sexual gender based violence, an approach detailed in UNHCR’s 2003 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Guidelines for Prevention and Response.

*\* name changed to protect identity*





GIRLS ON THE MOVE IN

# RWANDA

## FOOD CUTS CHALLENGING GIRLS IN REFUGEE CAMP

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**1**7-year-old Mariza Mutamuriza is one of many girls who fled the Democratic Republic of the Congo and now lives in Rwanda as a refugee.

World Vision staff recently met with her to find out about the challenges she faces:

**What happened in your community that forced you to leave?**

**Mariza:** I was 12 at the time. I remember going to school everyday but having to leave class in the middle because of the conflict. It was bad. Young girls were being [sexually] violated and harmed, while young boys were forced to go fight. I can't remember a time when my friends, siblings and I were just living normal lives.

**What situation occurred on the day they left, why did you leave?**

**Mariza:** I remember that we had tried to leave our home for

a very long time. So one day as soon as we could, we did. My siblings and I left on foot with some of our neighbours, but we left our parents behind. They joined us later.

**What obstacles did you face on the journey?**

**Mariza:** We were very hungry and had to walk a long distance. Fortunately, we received help when we got to Rwanda.

We've had to settle into our situation and have been refugees for five years now. It is, at least, better for us than it is for our fellow Congolese who didn't manage to flee.

**What did you take with you from your home country and why?**

**Mariza:** Nothing. We fled with absolutely nothing but the clothes on our backs. We didn't have time to think about anything or take anything. No food and no blankets. We slept in bushes when night fell.

### Can you describe your current living situation?

**Mariza:** Basically, most families in this camp are given two rooms each. As there are seven of us in our family, four of us girls share a room, while my father and brother share the other. We have to squeeze to even fit on our beds, and it's tough. I sometimes feel like these beds can't hold all our weight.

Another challenge we face is that the food we receive is not enough. There was a time when we received more, but that situation has changed over the last few months. Now, we only eat one meal a day. Every day, we share this food from one big plate.

For me and other young girls at the camp, sanitary towels are rare. Although each girl and woman of menstruation age receives one pack of sanitary towels every month, this isn't always consistent. Sometimes, we have to wait months to get a new pack.

Fortunately we can keep ourselves, our clothes, and our homes clean thanks to the water we have available here at the camp.

*“Access to sufficient and adequate sanitary materials is central to women and girls' dignity and well-being” — UNHCR, [Protecting refugee women: promoting gender equality, 2011](#)*

### What are your hopes and dreams for the future?

**Mariza:** I'm very keen on school and am good in math. I would like to become a doctor when I'm done with school, and move my family up out of our current situation.

But it's hard to have hope when you don't have enough food to eat.

**Pacifique Ntezimana works for World Vision Rwanda and is currently running a Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) project at Mugombwa Refugee Camp.**

### Can you provide some context to highlight the issues facing girls in this community?

**Pacifique:** Mariza is not the only girl who's affected by these issues.

Due to budget cuts or funding issues, the amount of food provided was reduced. Refugees at this camp rely on cash-based interventions instead of directly receiving foodstuffs.

The issue with sanitary packages is also not new. They keep praying for this situation to change, and we try and do the best we can for the entire refugee community.

### What assistance is World Vision providing to this family?

**Pacifique:** World Vision Rwanda is currently running a Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) project at Mugombwa Refugee Camp. Mariza's family benefits from the presence of water points at the camp.





GIRLS ON THE MOVE IN

# SOMALIA

## A QUEST FOR PEACE FOR CHILDREN IN BAIDOA

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**R**ahma was calm.. Her thoughts well contained. At 15 years of age, she would have been married, but at 15, she was in school. She was in standard (grade) two. It didn't matter that she was older for her grade. All that mattered was that she was in school.

“My life has changed because I am now learning,” says Rahma.

She left her home with her mother and auntie from an area 35 kilometres from Baidoa town in South Central Somalia because her relatives wanted her to be educated. Rahma's home was in the middle of an area that saw frequent fighting between armed groups. There, many girls never got the chance to study and were often married shortly after they reached puberty.

The chance Rahma had to leave her community inspired a love of learning.

Still, Rahma's learning journey was challenged in her new home. As the night closed in and the day slipped away, each day, she could not study because she was shrouded in darkness.

Through a World Vision programme, Rahma received solar lamps.

Her excitement was contagious. She had one word to say about the lamps: Study. She would use the lamps to study.

“Sometimes it's just a simple thing that makes the difference between a child staying or dropping out of school,” says Regina Marete, World Vision's commodities officer in a World Vision Somalia and UNOCHA education project. “Solar lamps are an effective tool to keep girls going to class and up to speed with the lessons the teacher is providing.”

Despite life improving, Rahma longs for one thing. Peace.

“With peace everything will be good. With peace we can have schools and move around,” she says.

With her young mind she can feel the absence of peace in her community, yet she has a future and a hope for herself and her community.



“I want to be a nurse,” says Rahma. People are suffering because of lack of nurses and because of that, I want to serve my community as a nurse.”

According to a 2017 UNICEF report, the worst instances of armed conflict are concentrated in parts of the South Somalia where armed groups, government forces and African Union peacekeeping forces continue to clash. As well, violence is linked to communal clashes, political rivalries, revenge killings and struggles over resources.

“In many parts of Somalia, girls’ development is threatened by attacks from militia, kidnapping, criminal violence or sexual assault. Aside from the risks of physical harm, these conditions rob children of their freedom to play, to move freely or to go to school. Without an education, girls have fewer opportunities and are more likely to earn less in the future,” says World Vision Somalia’s Berryl Auma, a technical specialist in education and child protection. “Girls need an environment where they can be safe to fully reach their potential and to adequately contribute to their communities as adults.”

*A fundamental shift is needed: away from reacting to disasters and conflicts as they unfold and sometimes linger for decades, towards prevention, preparedness and empowerment of individuals and communities to withstand and recover from them.” - UNFPA, 2015*

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GIRLS ON THE MOVE IN

# SOUTH SUDAN

## RECOVERING FROM A LIFE OF CONFLICT

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**S**ince the onset of civil conflict in 2013, over 4 million people have fled their homes, and 6 million people affected by conflict are in need of protection. Over 60 per cent are children.

Often the most forgotten and vulnerable in this crisis are adolescent girls. They are more likely to be forced to withdraw from school, due to a low priority placed on girls' education. Over half will be forcibly married before their 18th birthday. The brutality of this crisis is such that one in two adolescent girls will experience sexual violence by age 25. Of the 19,000 children recruited or associated with armed groups, up to 40% are adolescent girls.

In January 2018, hundreds of child soldiers were officially released from armed groups. World Vision has been supporting the family reunification, psychological recovery, and reintegration process for these adolescent girls and boys.

Agnes\* was just 13 years old when she was abducted by one of South Sudan's armed groups and forced to join the country's brutal conflict.

"They took me in 2014, when my mother sent us to fetch water. Immediately four men came out (of the bush). We entered the bush. They tied my hands and legs and made us stay," she says.

Agnes recounts being part of groups that attacked vehicles, shooting and stealing; sexually assaulting male and female passengers. She witnessed people – other children – being captured. She watched as people were told to kill their spouse or parents told to kill their children.

"One man refused to kill his wife. They talked to me and told me to kill that man. But I hadn't done that sin before. They said if I didn't kill that man, they would kill me. They made me kill that man.

"I didn't feel okay but I pretended because if I showed it, then they would come and urinate on my body and start beating me. That night, I started praying."

Upon her release in February 2018, after three years as a child soldier, she was struck with a new reality.

“Up to this time, I do not know where my brother is. My mother died. The group came and killed my father. Now I don't have any family. We didn't choose this. My hope is to go back to school.”

The experience of Agnes and other adolescent girls forcibly recruited in South Sudan is distinctively traumatising. Girls are highly stigmatised, not only as former child soldiers, but also as victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

Agnes is one of hundreds of adolescent girls who will receive counselling, psychosocial support, education and skills training from World Vision. The challenges faced by adolescent girls in South Sudan, especially those recruited by armed actors, are sweeping. World Vision joins partners in calling for an end to all forms of violence against girls, and a commitment to protect the future generation.

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*\* Agnes spoke under the condition of anonymity and with a World Vision social worker present to provide emotional support.*





GIRLS ON THE MOVE IN

# SUDAN

## THE FIRST REFUGEE GIRL TO ATTEND SCHOOL IN HER COMMUNITY

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An estimated 763,000 South Sudanese refugees have arrived in neighbouring Sudan since 2013, according to UNHCR as of 21 June 2018. More than 41,000 of those South Sudanese refugees live in South Darfur state.

Twelve-year-old Mary Mubark is one of these refugees now living in neighbouring Sudan.

Here, Mary is the first girl in the refugee community to attend school. She's also the first in her family to pursue an education.

She's currently in Grade 3.

"When we came to Sudan, Mary was about nine years old and although she was two years older than the age of joining school here, we encouraged her that it was still appropriate for her to join school," explains Angeline, Mary's 18-year-old sister.

Back in her home country of South Sudan, Mary and her siblings did not attend school.

Fleeing a flood that destroyed the family's crops, Mary and her family of eight arrived in Sudan in 2013.

"There was also the threat of a spill over of violence from a neighbouring state," Angeline says.

With only a few personal belongings and very little savings, the family arrived to stay with their relatives in South Darfur.

They aimed to start over and begin farming again.

*"For every ten refugee boys in primary school, there are fewer than eight refugee girls" – UNHCR, [Left Behind, Refugee Education in Crisis, 2017](#)*

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But it wasn't to be.

Not long after arriving in Sudan, Mary's father died. Life has been difficult since.

According to Angeline, their mother spends most of her day working in people's houses to raise money to take care of the family and support Mary through school.

Mary is a rarity here. She is one of only four refugee children attending primary school. She is also the only girl.

Mr. Al Douma Hamid Mohemmed is the Commissioner of Humanitarian Aid Commission in Mary's village. He says there are a total of 387 refugee children living in this community.

He attributes the low school turnout to refugee families' inability to raise school fees. In addition to school uniforms, notebooks and stationery, a family has to pay nearly US \$35 for a child to attend primary school.

At the Al Salam locality, World Vision in partnership with the World Food Programme has been supporting refugee families like Mary's with food assistance to meet their daily food needs since June.

**62%** of the 2 million refugees from South Sudan are children.

Despite the challenges, Mary is determined. She wants to work as a humanitarian aid worker one day, like the ones she interacts with.

And she's committed to make it happen. In the October midterm exams, Mary got an A+ as her final grade.

Mary's dreams will only be possible with further assistance. She and other children in Sudan need support to stay in school, to reach their potential.



**91%** of the world's children attend primary school.



Only **61%** of refugee children attend primary school.





## GIRLS ON THE MOVE IN **TANZANIA**

### GIRLS ENGAGING IN SURVIVAL SEX TO COPE IN REFUGEE CAMPS

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**W**e'll call her Scola Kazibure but it's not her real name. But she is among the more than 420,000 people who have left Burundi in recent years and lives in a refugee camp. This is her story, in her own words:

"I am 16 years old. I used to live with my parents and five siblings in Burundi but I ended up here.

"I lived with my parents peacefully back home but then fighting broke out. It was a scary situation for anyone to live through.

"I decided to leave home with my little brother, he was seven at the time and we left my parents there. I was influenced by groups of other children and our neighbours. My parents refused to leave but I thought that it was the right thing to do because I thought that there would be a better life in Tanzania.

"Still, running away from our home was not an easy decision to make. We faced a lot of challenges and abuses while on the run. I was raped and beaten more than I could count by security officers on the road.

**“Women and girls may be compelled to exchange sex for material goods or protection, or sell sex in order to survive. Survival sex is frequently a direct consequence of gaps in assistance, failures of registration systems or family separations.” – UNHCR, *Action against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: An Updated Strategy, 2011***

“If that was not enough, at the border to enter Tanzania we were required to leave a collateral as assurance that we would come back to Burundi.

“For me, my only option was my little brother.

“It wasn’t easy to agree to give up my brother, so we decided to play smart by sneaking through two different routes and meeting at a certain location. But it was not possible, so it was goodbye. Since April 2015, I have not seen my young brother. I have tried to look for him in other camps hoping to see him again.

“After a three-day journey from the border, I was received here by some local organisations at the camp. They helped me and I was then accepted by UNHCR.

“Later on, a Burudian couple took me in as their child. I had to live with this family, especially because of all the security issues I experienced.

“Behind the scenes, I still had a mission to have a good life. I became sexually active and started to earn some money out of my secret behaviour.

“I become pregnant and my guardian parents tried to force me to marry the man who was responsible for the pregnancy. I did not want to get married, so I didn’t disclose his identity.

“Luckily for me, I continue to live with my guardian parents. I had a baby girl and she is now three months old.”

**Needs for Burundi refugees living in neighbouring countries:**  
“Establishment of safe spaces for women, girls, and boys, to access information on Sexual Gender Based Violence, Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and referral pathways.” — UNHCR, *Burundi Regional Refugee, Response Plan Mid Year Revision, 2017*

Unfortunately, survival sex is common among girls and women in refugee settlements. The **UNHCR** suggests that survival sex in refugee settlements can be prevented when the following action is taken. These have been edited for simplicity.

- Develop comprehensive **livelihood support strategies** based on the capacities of women and men.
- Implement interventions that **boost self-reliance**, including projects to strengthen women’s livelihood skills, provide access to financial and other work-related services for safe and decent employment.
- **Prevent delays** in distribution of food and non-food items that may force people to engage in harmful practices like survival sex.
- Ensure the **provision of sanitary materials** for women and girls of reproductive age.
- **Inform and train staff** on matters relating to survival sex to ensure that all persons of concern to UNHCR are treated with respect and without discrimination.
- Ensure that at-risk refugee children or child survivors have **access to resettlement**.

– UNHCR, *Action against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: An Updated Strategy, 2011*



GIRLS ON THE MOVE IN

# UGANDA

## THWARTING CHILD MARRIAGE IN REFUGEE SETTLEMENTS

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**T**hat morning, 14-year-old Jackeline Kiden made up her mind. She walked to the young man's hut and asked him to take her as his wife.

This was her last card. Life was failing Jackeline. She'd been abandoned too many times by the people she loved. This was the only solution she could imagine.

Before she was born, Jackeline's father left her mother. When she turned 10, Jackeline's mother chose her new lover instead of her daughter.

Jackeline was left in the care of an ailing grandmother in South Sudan's Yei state. When fighting broke out three years later, everyone fled the violence. But Jackeline and her grandmother remained behind, hoping to hide from the fighting – her grandmother too ill to leave their community.

Noticing the fighting intensify, Jackeline's grandmother made a tough choice – she pled with a neighbour to take Jackeline along to escape the fighting, sending the girl to Uganda while remaining behind.

Jackeline and the neighbour arrived in Uganda as refugees in early 2017. The two stayed together in Imvepi for close to one month until one day when Jackeline's neighbour suddenly relocated to another settlement with her new lover.

"I had gone to play with some new friends, when I came back in the evening I did not find her at home. I only found my belongings," Jackeline explains.

*“Displaced girls are often married off as children in an effort to ensure their security” – UN Women, 2017*

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It was the very same thing Jackeline's own mother had done to her several years before. Again, Jackeline was lost, dejected and alone.

She had not even enrolled in school as she could not find money to buy scholastic materials like a uniform and books. She wasn't sure how she would make it.

So, Jackeline hatched a quick fix measure to counter her woes.

After staying alone for close to two weeks, word soon reached her that one of her male neighbours in his mid 20's was looking for a woman to marry.

Jackeline had had enough of this harsh life. She needed a liberator, someone to wipe away her tears.

"I wanted someone who could take care of me, someone to provide my basic needs. I wanted to go back and re-unite with my grandmother but I feared she was dead. So I went to the man and asked him to take me as his wife," she explains. Jackeline had opted for what any girl in her situation could easily end up doing.

So just like that, Jackeline's proposal was accepted. The young man was happy to find a potential wife. Yet, before the marriage could take place, Jackeline needed to first spend some time at her future in-law's home, according to customary traditions. So Jackeline was taken to the young man's mother, to prepare her for marriage. This was just a few meters away from her own place.

But Jackeline wasn't married.

*Informed refugee communities who know about child rights and the dangers of early marriage will protect girls from becoming child brides."*

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After a few days, some of her in-laws noticed that Jackeline was not yet ready for marriage. They could see that it was not something she wanted to get into. In fact, one of them alerted World Vision about the marriage plans after having a long discussion with the 14-year-old.

"We immediately responded by escalating the issue to the settlement authorities. We asked the man's mother to call off all marriage plans which she did. When we spoke with Jackeline, she told us that all she wanted was someone to take care of her, someone to provide for her needs. At this point we knew that she needed a caring foster family to stay with, not a man to marry her," explains Mbabazi Caroline, a World Vision case worker.

Through its refugee foster care network, World Vision was able to find a foster family for Jackeline some 10 kilometers away from where she previously stayed.

"We wanted to change her environment, to take her away from her neighbours. They had already known a lot about her situation so we wanted her to be in a new and secure environment, to get her a fresh start but also to take her away from that man who could eventually destabilise her," Mbabazi Caroline says.

She has been placed with a foster family who are a refugee couple, blessed with two biological children. Jackeline is their third. Her foster mother, 24-year-old Sarah Senema worries that Jackeline has not experienced parental affection since childhood.

Jackeline is now in school, enrolled in Primary two. She is determined to study. World Vision has also bought her scholastic materials plus a few basic items like clothes. Every week, a World Vision case worker visits Jackeline to understand how she is adjusting.

Under its refugee foster care programme, World Vision has fostered more than 900 refugee children at Imvepi and Bidibidi refugee settlement in northern Uganda. In partnership with UNHCR, the organisation provides support to foster families essential household items and cash.

Jackeline was fortunate to avoid a child marriage, but there are many other silent cases of child marriage in refugee settlements that go unnoticed. Many helpless refugee girls like her are quietly married in exchange for a secure livelihood. Unless someone reports, cases like Jackeline's where family members are part of the problem, they are hard to prevent.

In October 2017, World Vision received funding from UNICEF to combat child marriage in the refugee and host communities of northern Uganda. The one-year project aims at rallying community stakeholders to commit to addressing child marriage and strengthening child protection structures in the communities affected by the refugee crisis.

*Community protection structures and reporting systems help save girls from early marriage."*

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

**W**orld Vision believes that preventing and ending violence against children on the move is possible, and we call on international and national decision makers to:

## **Change attitudes, norms and behaviours:**

- Recognise that children are children first and foremost and their rights and protection must be a priority, whether they are migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, stateless or internally displaced.
- Always put children's best interests at the heart of decision making in all situations of a child's displacement.
- End criminalisation of children in transit or at destination.
- Accurately portray the stories of children on the move, including why they move, their distinct vulnerabilities and capacities, their experiences and challenges.

## **Systematically scale up solutions that work:**

- Address the root causes that force children to move, the risks to children on the move, and the risks for children in their destination.
- Scale up solutions that work for children and protect their rights.
- Strengthen national and local child protection systems to identify and meet the needs of children on the move, provide adequate economic and human resources and ensure that systems are child-friendly and gender responsive.
- Through voluntary state reporting, clearly articulate how implementing the Sustainable Development Goals addresses violence against children on the move with relevant linkages to Goals 10 and 16 and Goals such as 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 where relevant.
- Consider and strengthen engagement with faith communities, to reinforce context-appropriate local child protection systems.

## **Invest in comprehensive and conflict-sensitive responses to violence against internally displaced children:**

- Develop country-led frameworks for reducing internal displacement to facilitate planning, target setting and monitoring for change<sup>25</sup>.
- Within these, set explicit targets and indicators for reducing violence against internally displaced children and for improving their access to protection services.
- Integrate protection needs of internally displaced children into national and international commitments to end violence against children everywhere.

## **In conflict contexts, enhance efforts to systematically prevent grave violations against children:**

- Take swift and appropriate action to prevent grave violations occurring.
- Ensure the provision of specialized services and appropriate care for children experiencing violence.
- Where grave violations occur, all children must have access to justice for violations and crimes committed against them.
- Urgently invest in solutions that work for children on the move:
- Increase funding for sustainable and evidence-based approaches to addressing violence against children on the move and for durable solutions to forced displacement.
- Ensure funding is timely, predictable, multi-year, and flexible.
- Recognise the critical and life-saving importance of sectors like child protection, psychosocial support and education. Fund regular context analyses, and training in conflict sensitivity to help prevent any possible contribution to further violence.

## **INITIATIVE ON CHILD RIGHTS IN THE GLOBAL COMPACTS**

The Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts draws on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and guidance from the Committee on the Rights of the Child to advocate for a common approach to protecting children on the move. World Vision sits on the Steering Committee. In June 2017, the Initiative partners came together with children and youth, representatives from governments, civil society, multilateral institutions and the private sector at a Global Conference on Children on the Move. We agreed a set of recommendations for protecting, promoting and implementing human rights of children on the move in the proposed Global Compacts. These recommendations should continue to be implemented in full at all levels by nation states, and apply to all children on the move as the threshold for upholding their rights. The recommendations are:

- Non-discrimination and integration of children
- Best interests of the child
- Child protection
- An end to the immigration detention of children
- Children's access to services
- Sustainable solutions in the best interests of the child, laws and policies provide for the right of refugee and migrant children to participate in any decisions concerning them

# ENDNOTES

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This report was informed by interviews with displaced girls and their families, along with humanitarian workers responding to refugees, returnees and displaced people.

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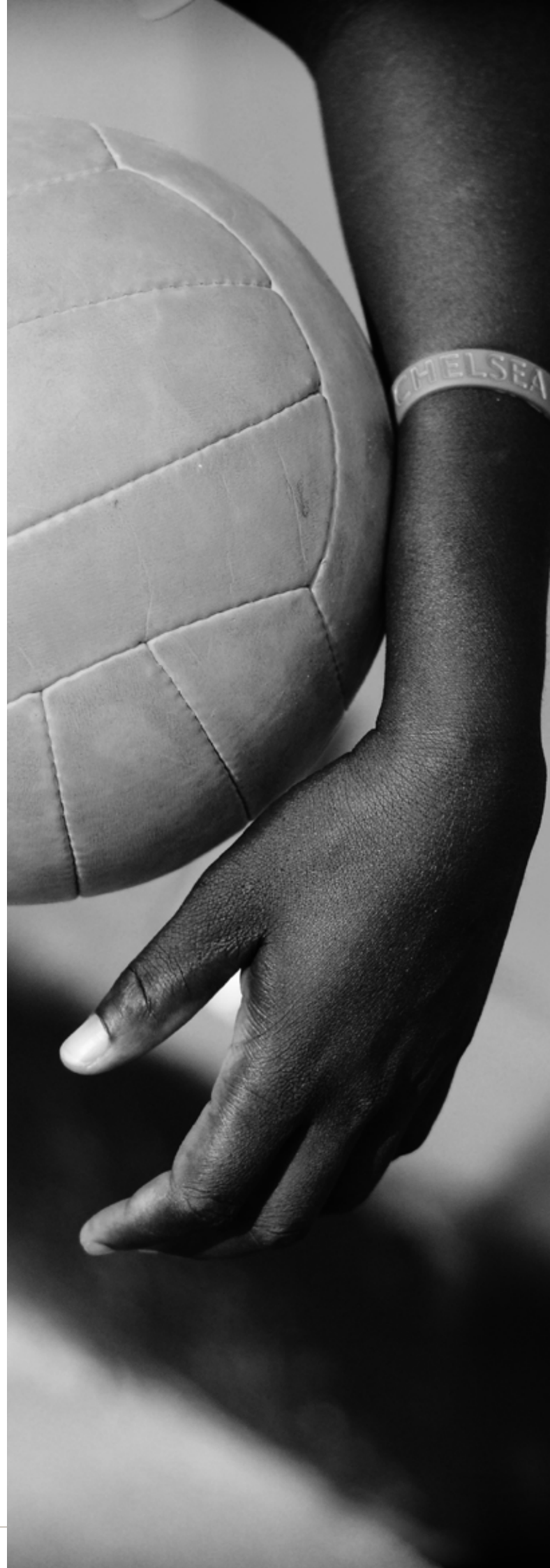
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