

## **“TOUCHING SUFFERING SOULS THROUGH VOLUNTEERING” - A CASE STUDY**

This is a personal experience as narrated by one of the IDPs during the counseling sessions by National Volunteer Network Trust (NAVNET) volunteer counselors at Mukuru kwa Njenga Slums – Nairobi Kenya.

“My name is Christine Wakiuru, born and brought up in Molo – Rift Valley. My grandparents migrated from central province. I was married to a kalenjin man and between us we had two sons aged 4 and 6 years.

We were a happy family living in Kuresoi area of Rift Valley Province, running our own shop and practicing farming until the night of 30<sup>th</sup> December 2007 when we were sent off running for our dear lives. This was immediately after President Kibaki has been declared the winner of the disputed 2007 presidential elections. My children and I managed to run away, spending the night in the bush before reaching Molo town the following morning. We joined other people who were also escaping from the violence like us.

As days went by the number of those who had run for their lives increased and the government relocated us from Molo to Nakuru show grounds, which was later identified as an Internally Displaced Persons camp.

A week down the line, Nakuru show ground camp became so crowded and due to the fear that we could be attacked again, we decided to relocate to Nairobi. I had no one to turn to, no family to run to, and nowhere to go. I had no idea of my husband’s whereabouts. My children and I followed the other IDPs only to find ourselves in Mukuru kwa Njenga Slums.

With absolutely nothing, my children and I could only cry. A Good Samaritan gave us an empty room for accommodation. We went looking for boxes and cartons for use as mattresses, metal tins as cooking pots and their lids as plates. This was not easy for us because before the clashes we used to feed and dress well. My children used to go to school and we had a shelter over our heads.

As confused as we were, little did we know that my husband had been killed. This was despite the fact that he belonged to same ethnic community (Kalenjin) as those who had evicted us from our homes. I belonged to the unwanted community (Kikuyu). We believe he was killed because when they demanded him to produce his wife- to be killed- he could not because I had already fled with my children. This was devastating for me because at the same time I got news that my mother in-law had also died. I could not attend their burials nor step in my matrimonial home. This made me more stressed and confused.

Having gone through all this, I really feel rejected, hated, and I don’t think I will ever trust any one in my life. This made me remember my dear mother who died when I was only 14 leaving me and my brother, who was only 10years old then, in the cruel hands of our uncles and aunties who took all her property and denied us education”.

After she shared her ordeal with NAVNET volunteers, they felt the need to counsel her on several areas. This included;

- How to cope with grief and loss
- Gaining trust with other people
- Positive living

NAVNET volunteers also empowered her with business skills like beads making and crocheting in order to be able to make money to cater for her children's needs and that of her own. After several weeks of counseling, NAVNET volunteers found out that she was recovering slowly from the denial and was picking her pieces and ready to face life as a winner but not a coward. She had also grown spiritually and was trusting God for the very best in her future endeavors. Toward the end of the third month of counseling, Christine told NAVNET volunteers ***“following what I witnessed in Molo after Kibaki was declared the Winner of 2007 elections, I never thought I would one day feel secure and somehow happy with my children. Continue with your good work of touching many suffering souls”***. Christine Wakiuru is currently doing casual jobs and is able to feed her children and pay rent.