

Summary for Community Contributors

Who we are

The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) improves the lives and protects the rights of women, children, and youth who have been displaced by conflict and crisis. We travel to refugee settings and talk with refugees to find out what they need. We also speak with UN agencies and international and local organizations. We then make recommendations to international and national organizations about what should be done to improve the lives of refugees and others displaced by conflict and disaster.

What we did in Kenya

WRC has a project that is looking at sexual violence against Congolese, Somali, and South Sudanese refugee men, boys, and transgender women who are living in Nairobi and Mombasa. Sexual violence can include injury to the private parts or being forced to have sex with another person. It can also include being forced to watch someone else being sexually violated, or buying sex from a minor. People who carry out sexual violence (perpetrators) are usually men, but women can also perpetrate sexual violence. In April and May 2019, a WRC researcher traveled to Nairobi and Mombasa to learn more about these issues. WRC held 24 focus groups with 149 refugees and spoke with 40 aid workers and service providers. UNHCR (the UN refugee agency) and HIAS, as well as community leaders and interpreters, helped us with our research.

What we found

You have a right to know what came out of this work. WRC learned that:

- Many refugee men, women, girls, and boys experienced sexual violence before, during, and after their flight to Kenya.
- Sexual violence against men and boys, as well as sexual violence against women and girls, appears to be common in the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. Many people were sexually abused during home raids and random stops, in captivity and detention, and at borders and checkpoints.
- In Somalia, some men and boys experience sexual violence by family and community members, members of other clans, and armed groups, but it is unclear how common it is.
- Many gay men and transgender women said they suffered sexual abuse in their home countries and in Kenya by family and community members, police officers, and others.
- In Mombasa, sexual exploitation of refugee boys and young men appears common.
- In Nairobi and Mombasa, refugees at increased risk of sexual violence and exploitation include gay men and boys, transgender persons, unaccompanied boys and young men, refugees selling sex, and detainees.
- People who have experienced sexual violence often have many medical, psychological, and social needs. Some services are available in Nairobi and Mombasa to help refugee women and men, including gay men and transgender women. With help and assistance, many people who experienced sexual violence can recover and live a full and normal life.
- There are barriers that prevent refugees from accessing services. For example, some refugees have limited information about the available services. They may not know where a man, boy, or transgender person who suffered sexual violence can go for help. Health providers, social workers, and others may not know that men and boys can be targeted for this kind of violence, or they may treat survivors with disrespect.

What if this happened to me or someone I know?

Sexual violence is NEVER the victim's fault. It is entirely the fault of the perpetrator. Anyone can be targeted for sexual violence. Sexual violence has medical and psychological consequences that can be treated or managed.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual violence and needs medical and/or mental health support:

- Call the police emergency hotline if you are in immediate danger: 999 or 112.
- Call the national helpline on sexual and gender-based violence: 1195. This number is free of charge and is active 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- In Nairobi, call the MSF sexual and gender-based violence hotline: 0711 400 506.
- Go to the nearest hospital for immediate medical or psychological care.
- Go to Nairobi Women's Hospital (in Nairobi and Mombasa), Kenyatta National Hospital, Mama Lucy Kibaki Hospital, or the MSF clinic in Mathare. These facilities have specialized care for sexual and gender-based violence. They are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

What's next?

The Women's Refugee Commission has published a comprehensive report on the findings and recommendations from this study, "We Have a Broken Heart": Sexual Violence against Refugees in Nairobi and Mombasa, Kenya. The full report is available in English and an executive summary is available in English and Kiswahili at <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/svproject>.

WRC is partnering with HIAS to pilot a project to support bridge-building between the Kenyan and refugee LGBTIQ communities.

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