



Interview with: Olive (06)
Interviewed by: Marie
Date of interview: 23 February 2017
Travel: DCR – Zambia – South Africa

Marie: Good morning, my sister. My name is Marie. I am from the Migration and the Inclusive City Project. I want to hear your story, or the story of your life, if you are willing to share it with me.

Olive: Yes, thank you. My name is Olive. I am very grateful and happy for this day because I did not think that there will ever be a day that someone will ask me about what happened to me in my life, but today I am able to share the story of my life with you.

We were woken up by shootings. Then people ran away to another location. Some were killed. I lost my entire family. My husband also lost his whole family. It was terrible and it is a miracle to see us alive today. It is by God's grace and that is why I am happy, my sister, to find someone like you today, someone who asks me about my life. It is my day.

We then continued to move from one place to another. Then my husband decided that we should just leave the country.

Marie: How many children do you have now?

Olive: [At that time I had] three children. When we fled we went up to Zambia to a refugee camp there.

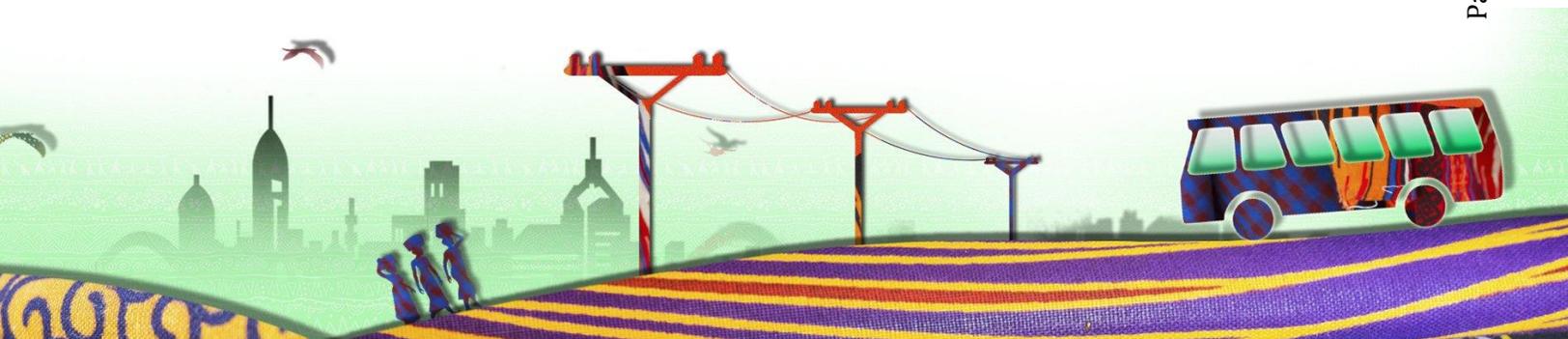
Marie: Can you tell me about the route you followed from Congo to Zambia?

Olive: We did not use any road. We walked from one village to another and crossed rivers. We used a boat to cross one big river where we met fishermen. We spoke to them and they agreed to help us cross the river into Zambia.

When we arrived on the other side, they welcomed us because they understood that we were fleeing war. They then put us in a refugee camp called Meheba in Zambia. It is a refugee camp situated in a deep forest far from other villages and very far from any town. That is why in Zambia you cannot enjoy the kind of freedom that you enjoy here. In Zambia a refugee cannot work or leave the camp. You are just there in the camp and your whole life is limited to that particular camp. You do everything there. That is how people live in that Zambian camp. Unfortunately life is very difficult there. You are like someone who has just fled war. The food is always insufficient. You have no decent place to sleep, let alone clothes to wear. Your job is to wait for food, not knowing when that food will come, and then when it comes it is not enough to feed everyone in the camp. The only way out is to grow your own crops and sell. Then you can make some money. But since this is in deep rural area, you will have to rely on people coming from town to come to buy or transport your produce. Often people grow peanuts, but what was worrying me and my husband was the fact that we could see no future there, for us or our children. Since we have suffered a lot, we would expect our children to have a better future at least, but what you see there is the death of children and no future at all.

Marie: Eh, Zambian people ... Does that mean that you tried to look for legal documents in Zambia and they did not give them to you, or you decided to go and live in a refugee camp?

Olive: Oh, in Zambia you cannot get proper documentation. People only leave the camp when they want to go overseas for resettlement. That's if UNHCR people take you out of Zambia for another country. Otherwise, there are people in that camp who were born there and are now grown up. Others have even got old there and have never left the camp. Their life is concentrated in the camp only. They wait





for resettlement but they don't go. Others end up dying in the camp because no one is allowed to leave the camp.

That is why we decided to find an alternative place where we can have peace and safety and where we are able to help our children prepare for their future life so that their future life is not limited, like their parents'. We don't want our children to go through what we went through. That is why we decided to leave the camp and look for another place to go.

So we left and came here and when we arrived here we found people who helped us to go to Home Affairs to apply for permit, which we subsequently received. However, that permit has limits in terms of the kind of work that one can do. It does not help at all.

Also, when walking we do not feel safe. We are scared, because this xenophobia thing is not different from the war that we experienced in our home country, because even here they kill people. They burn people alive. People are dying while fleeing, so it is like I am reliving the same picture of what happened when I was fleeing back home. Yet I was hoping that once I am here I will be safe but since I arrived, I am not safe at all. I am suffering. Even finding food is difficult. When I was pregnant I was forced to work up to the day of me giving birth. I had no one to help me.

Marie: Does that mean when you arrived here you gave birth to another child?

Olive: I left home with three children but when I arrived here I realised that I was pregnant. After suffering with that pregnancy, I gave birth, but I did not have even a single thing for the baby. I had no food for him. In addition, I had to work and for what job? Everywhere you go to look for work, like in Chinese shops, they look at the kind of paper that you have. This permit that we use does not help us at all. At the same time, my husband lost his job because of the kind of document that he was using (permit). Now my husband is a car guard. That is the job he is doing. Sometimes he gets angry and some other times he does not get angry. So we are suffering a lot in this country. Children are not going to school. They only stay at home and we lock them in if their father and I have to leave and go to work.

Marie: Does that mean that you have a child who supposed to be going to school but is not going. Why is that?

Olive: There is no money.

Marie: To use at school?

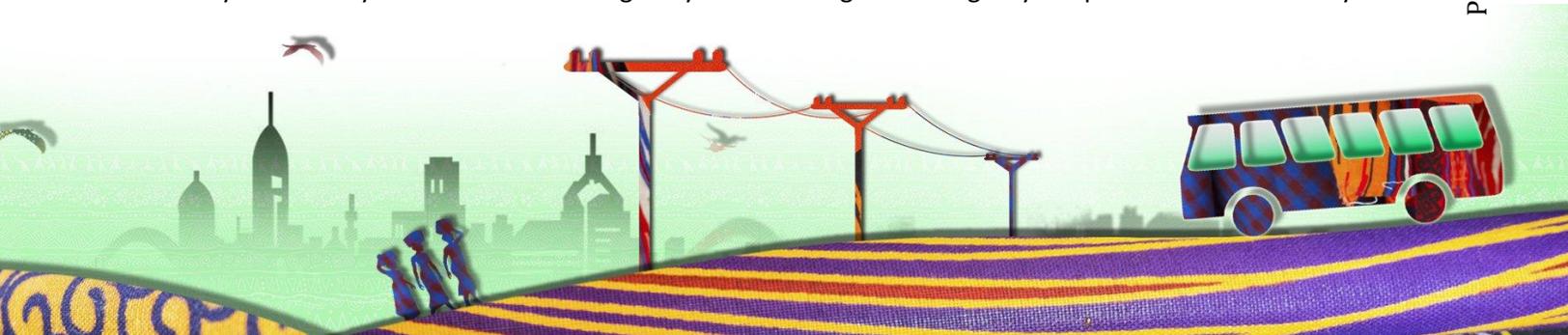
Olive: To use at school because he is now of school age, he should be going to school as we speak but, even the other one ... there are two [of school-going age] and they are both supposed to be at school but we cannot afford to send them to school.

Marie: How are you living with those children, considering that both you and your husband have to go to work and then children are not going to school? How are they coping?

Olive: We lock them up in our room after making porridge for them. This is because in this country you cannot leave a child on streets as you don't know what will happen to him. You must lock your door and put children in the room. When I come back from work then they can go out and play. If I am not there, they are inside. This is how we live here.

I went to different places to look for help. When I arrived at one particular place, I was told that I arrived late and they could not help me on the day because they had already completed their programme, so there is nothing I can do.

My children have to continue staying indoors. They can't go to school since we don't have money for school and other related fees. The job that their father is doing brings in very little money, not enough for us to pay rent and eat. I am sure you know the job of the car guard job, my sister. You stand and if you are lucky the owner of the car gives you something. One can give you up to a hundred rand if you





are lucky, but many others give you nothing. Now, how will you send children to school with that kind of money and uncertain life? Will you ever be able to buy them lunch? In addition, town schools have become very expensive. They ask for R4000 to register a child at school. Where will we get that R4000 for school fees while we are struggling to pay rent? So we will have to find a place far from town like in Overport or Sydenham. But then again that will require transport. Where will I get money for transport now? We just need someone to help us.

Marie: Now considering your living conditions, what do you think? Will you continue to live like that or what plan do you have for your future and that of your children?

Olive: The plan that I have ... mmm is to look to go back home. But I can't because I don't want to relive what I experienced when I was there, especially as we learn that they are still fighting. What I want is that my children should go to school so that they can aspire to a better life. If we, their parents, failed to live reasonably, at least our children should study even if it means us not getting money for rent or for food, but our children have to go to school.

