

Case study from Liberia

Abraham S. Koroma



Abraham S. Koroma, now 17, was abducted from his home in Montserrado County in 2003.

“I was doing errands when the soldiers entered my town. I heard shooting, and went to the school to get my sister. I left my parents at home. When we came back to the house, nobody was there, so we began walking on the road. There were many people going and we joined them. They began to shoot and everyone scattered. My sister and I ran for two miles.

“We met a group of government troops standing with guns. They said we should join them, we said no. We tried to run. They shot my sister and she died. I was forced to join with them to fight. On the way back along the road

with the troops I saw my mother. They shot her in the foot. I ran to stay with her and they said if I stay with her, they will kill me, so I was forced to join them. Another group came from behind us, and told me that my mother was already dead.

“They gave me a gun but I did not know how to use it. I felt bad, I was forced to hold it - my mother was there, but if I did not hold the gun I would die. I did not want to die, that is why I held the gun.

“I lost my sister and my mother. I have heard no news about my father. I spent two months with the troops. I told them I was going to the toilet and I escaped. I came to the bridge over the Mano River and when I saw a sign with the name of the river, I thought, this is Sierra Leone, so I began to run. I crossed the river into Sierra Leone. I still had my uniform and the gun. They stopped me and I explained, and they turned me over to UNHCR who took me to the Jembe refugee camp.

“If I think about my parents I feel bad. I want to do something to myself when this happens. I am getting medical help because my heart is hurting. And the sickness gets worse, I cough blood. I have bullet wounds on my hands.

“I am angry. If I saw some of these troops I would kill them and I would kill myself because they made me suffer. Let them forget about the gun. Let us forget about these wars. War is not good, it only destroys us. Even to sell the arms is bad. Let them make us become educated so we can be heroes for tomorrow.”