



Kemi's Story Identity



Identity

My name is Kemi. I am 21 years old, and I live in one of the loveliest villages in my country. It is situated on the vast plains, where the moon can be seen almost every night. I live with my parents and younger brother and sister. I am not yet married even though men have approached me. I will get married next year perhaps, after the harvesting season.

In our village, there are few schools and it is mainly the boys who go to study. I finished primary school, and since then I have stayed home to help my mother with housework and digging. I love my family and neighbors. We are all so close that people joke saying when one of us catches the flu, everyone else must get it. On market day, I go with my mother and sister to sell maize from our garden.

The air around my peaceful village began to sour a few years ago. My father has always talked about the men in the capital city who oppose our president and could become dangerous.

Recently they have formed a large group and started to attack innocent people. We listen to the radio together every night after dinner to keep track of the rebel forces.

We pretend that everything is okay because we have been safe in our village, but I must admit, the long and deeply rooted conflict in my country seems to be boiling to the surface. Lately the news reports say that the rebels have been raiding villages. We live in constant fear because we know that they are attacking villages very near to ours. Every evening, my family offers small sacrifices of prayer in the hope that we will be protected, but one night our prayers were not answered...

Go to Violence Strikes and take card 1.

Kemi's Story

Violence Strikes 1





Violence Strikes 1

In the late night hours, you lie awake listening to the crickets chirping. In the distance, you hear loud voices which appear to be coming closer. Shaking your siblings awake, you shout, “They are here. They have come!”

You see your father grabbing his machete and opening the door. The neighbors are running around and yelling. You hear gunshots in the air and you cower in a corner with your siblings. The rebels have come. There is chaos all over. The smell of smoke fills the air as flames spread all over the place.

“Go! We must run!” you scream, pushing your siblings and mother out the door. You run outside and trip over a dead body. Horrified, you see it is your father and you cry out with grief. You force yourself to run on.

You lose sight of your siblings and mother in the chaos. Your slippers come off and your feet hurt from the stones. You keep on running until you reach a hole in the ground where you used to play as a child. Covering yourself with leaves, you lie still.

As the sun comes up the noises change from shouts and screams to weeping and wailing. You are visibly shaking with fright. You look out to see the village in a state of ruin and despair. Running to your home which has burnt to the ground, you find your mother lying dead beside your father. There is no sign of your siblings. Grief falls over you, and you stumble to the ground. It is your aunt who finds you and gives you water to drink. You can hardly speak. You tell your aunt that you don’t know where your siblings are, and in shared grief, you try and gather whatever remains you can from your home.

If you decide to stay in the village with your aunt, go to Family and take card 1.

If you decide to take a chance and flee to town, go to Chance and take card 1.



Kemi's Story

Family 1



Family 1

A heavy silence has descended upon the village. It will take a lot of time for everyone to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives and begin to move forward. There is still a lot of fear as the conflict rages on in the country. You know the rebels could return at any time.

Friends and neighbors offer condolences and support to one another. Each family holds different burial ceremonies for their loved ones. People clear the charred remains and some try to rebuild their homes. Most of you move in with others because of the safety in numbers. You move in with your aunt and her children and other extended family. None of you really knows what will happen next, but you try and make the best of each day.

At the burial ceremony of your parents, you offer prayers for your siblings to return home alive, even though deep down you are losing hope of ever seeing them again. You spend the days digging in the garden, weeding, harvesting and spending time with your cousins and aunt. There are days when you find yourselves laughing as you go to the well and chat about good times, but the laughter is covered by dread and uncertainty.

One night the laughter stops completely...

Go to Violence Strikes and take card 2.



Kemi's Story

Chance 1



Chance 1

You cannot bear the thought of living in the same village without your parents or siblings. You try to persuade your aunt to go to the town with you but she says that she cannot leave her home and children. You find others who are fleeing your village and you join their procession. The town is many kilometers away. Your feet become sore and your mouth dry. You have packed only a little food but it is enough to keep you from collapsing.

You arrive in town at night. Here, it is as if people do not know what is going on in the villages. There is music blaring from the discotheques, people drinking in the bars—life seems normal. You wonder if these people are unaware of what is going on or if they are just trying to forget the chaos that surrounds them.

Together with the group, you find shelter on the veranda of a shop. It is safer in town, but you still cannot sleep. Days pass and the group splits up, with many going off together to find work or extended family members. You are left alone with only the small amount of money you brought with you from home. It won't last more than a week.

You go around searching for work, but there are few opportunities and you don't have many useful skills. Just as your money is about to run out, you meet a woman who is looking for someone who can deliver food to the workers in the market. You are glad to find a way to earn money, but you still feel terribly lonely without your family.

If you decide to stay in town and take the work, go to Work and take card 1.

If you decide to return to the village to be with your aunt, go to Family and take card 2.



Kemi's Story

Family 2



Family 2

You are scared and full of shame as you make the long journey back to your village. Without money or other people accompanying you, you can only hope that you find your way safely. You wish that you had some news or money to share with your aunt. Instead there is just a pit of fear in your stomach, not knowing exactly what to expect.

You arrive at last and head straight to your aunt, who is happy to see you. “You have returned so soon, Kemi. Is everything okay? What happened in town?” You bow your head as you explain to her that the conflict has not yet reached the town. Your aunt is disappointed to learn that you did not bring any money home and is even further angered to hear that you turned down a decent job. “Why did you even go to town to just come back empty-handed?” she grumbles. “You’re just another mouth to feed now.”

When you ask about your siblings, you are crushed that there is still no news about them. You consider staying with your aunt, but you don’t want to add to her burden since she is already struggling. You also feel like a failure and know you should return to town to take the work that was offered to you.

After a few days of thinking, you tell your aunt, “Auntie, I’m going to go back to town. I will send money back to you as soon as I can.”

Your aunt is reluctant for you to travel alone, but finally she agrees and you plan to head to town the following day. But things do not go according to plan...

Go to Violence Strikes and take card 2.



Kemi's Story

Work 1



Work 1

As you go about your work, there is not a day that goes by when you do not think of your family. You often cry yourself to sleep because the sadness is so overwhelming. You know that there is still conflict in the villages because there are many people arriving in town daily.

Delivering hot food to market vendors keeps you busy but your employer is not reliable about paying you. Sometimes you go home after a long day with nothing. On the days she does give you money, you keep just a little for yourself and save the rest for your aunt and cousins in the village. There are times when you deliver food and men make sexual advances at you and grab your breasts or bum. It humiliates you but you feel there is nothing you can do. You recall the sight of your dead parents and the homes that were burnt and you know you are in a better place. You even try finding out where the rebels may have taken your siblings. There are a couple of people who are former abductees who managed to escape. They warn you that the rebels are always on the move because they are scared of the government forces finding them.

“It is most likely that your siblings have been forced to fight alongside them or if not, they are probably dead.” That news is too much to bear.

As time goes on, you still feel a void and long to be with your only remaining family, so you decide to return to the village. When you arrive, you are glad to find your aunt and cousins safe. You are looking forward to getting some sleep now that you are with your family again. But it is not to be...

Go to Violence Strikes and take card 2.

Kemi's Story

Violence Strikes 2





Violence Strikes 2

Night falls and you go to sleep with the feeling that something is not right. You don't want to alarm the others but you just know that something is wrong. You are trying to fall asleep when you hear the dreaded sounds of marching and shouting.

"Wake up quickly!" you yell at the top of your voice. You are too late. This time, the rebels have encircled the village so fast that it is almost impossible for anyone to escape.

They order all of you out of the house. You can only watch as they steal your food, blankets and clothes before they set your house on fire. Dragging you, your aunt, and your female cousins roughly across the ground, a group of soldiers orders you to strip or be killed. When you plead with them to let you go, they just laugh. There are six of them and they take turns raping each one of you. You scream in brutal pain. You close your eyes because you cannot bear to see your aunt being violated in such a way. After it is all over, the only sounds are the whimpers and groans from your cousins and the cries for help all around you.

You must have fallen unconscious after that because the next thing you know, two women are standing over you. They help you sit up and tell you they are taking you to the hospital for treatment. You cannot see your cousins anywhere but your aunt is lying on the floor in the corner.

"No!" you scream. With very little strength, you crawl over to her. She is dead. You weep uncontrollably.

If you decide to go with the women to look for treatment in town, then go to Medical Care and take card 1.

If you decide to go on your own to one of the camps you have heard about, then go to Camp and take card 1.

Kemi's Story

Medical Care 1





Medical Care 1

The journey to the hospital feels like it takes days. There is blood coming from your vagina and you can hardly walk. When you arrive, there are so many people—children, women, boys and men seated inside, on the balcony, and on the ground waiting for help. The women who brought you explain that they must leave you here. You thank them and feel the dread of losing their familiar faces. It takes a long time before the nurse checks on you. You have been badly injured and will need to stay until the doctor can see you. He only comes once a week they tell you, and as they roughly dress your wounds, you cannot help wincing in pain.

The hospital is hot and stuffy and the stench is almost unbearable. Each day that passes, more people die. You are alone. You sleep curled up on the veranda and only eat when kind strangers share small bits with you. Thinking of your family and all that you have lost, you feel there is nothing left for you.

When the doctor finally comes, he has only a few minutes for you. He says you have extensive and deep tears in your vagina. He seems disgusted that so many men raped you. He gives you some painkillers but says there isn't much he can do. Over the next few weeks the pain very slowly begins to lessen. You begin to walk around without discomfort. You know that you cannot continue to sleep outside the hospital and live off of scraps of food, but you don't know where to go.

The next morning you walk down the hill behind the hospital to bathe and fetch water. You are on your way back when someone hits you hard on the head. You want to turn around but the person orders you to keep walking ahead...

Go to Violence Strikes and take card 3.



Kemi's Story

Camp 1



Camp 1

There is only death and destruction behind you in what used to be your village, so you make yourself keep walking toward one of the camps you heard about. You don't know anywhere else to go. More than an hour into your journey, you have hardly made any progress. You are bleeding and the pain in your legs when you walk has caused you to stumble many times. You see two men walking toward you in the distance. There is only scrubby bush to hide behind so you do not go unnoticed. Once they reach you, one man shouts, "Who are you and where are you coming from?" You are still shaking with fright as you explain that your home was just attacked. He laughs callously and demands money if you want to continue your journey without trouble. When you say you have nothing, he pulls and grabs at your clothes, trying to find it. Then he notices the blood staining your skirt and decides to leave you, saying you'd be more trouble than you are worth.

Exhausted, terrified, and still bleeding, you are unable to move. At dusk, three women walk by with many children. They notice you and stop. They are on their way to the camp. It seems they have endured similar losses and violence as you have. You cannot walk on your own and they cannot help you as they have so many children to carry and tend to. They leave you with a little food and water and tell you that there is a small river just around the bend. You watch as they disappear down the road. The next morning you somehow manage to reach the river. You bathe, sleep again, and then get up to try to find some food. As you are getting up, someone knocks you on the head and as you start to turn around, orders you to keep moving...

Go to Violence Strikes and take card 3.

Kemi's Story

Violence Strikes 3





Violence Strikes 3

You cannot believe what is happening to you again. You cannot even scream for you know no one is nearby, so you remain quiet and obediently follow directions. The man ties your hands together and drags you along behind him at the end of a short rope. You walk for what seems like hours in the hot sun, and as dehydration sets in, you begin to stumble.

“Keep moving,” the man orders.

Soon, you find yourself in a large encampment of many rebels, women, and young children. The man orders you to kneel down and says that you are going to be his wife from now on. You must cook, clean, bear him children, and obey orders.

Immediately, you are ordered into a house where five other women serve the same man. He forces you to have sex multiple times a day, which reopens the wounds from the rebel gang rape. The pain is unspeakable. He also forces you do it in front of the other women and children with no regard to privacy. Many times, and often in the middle of the night, the whole camp is forced to get up and start moving.

You soon discover that you are pregnant. You can't imagine how you will survive pregnancy and are certain both you and your baby will die of starvation before it's time. But somehow the months pass and your labor pains begin late one night when you are set up at another makeshift camp. The labor is long and very painful, and you can feel that you are not progressing.

If you decide to wait for someone to come, go to Chance and take card 2.

If you want to go look for help, go to Friends & Neighbors and take card 1.



Kemi's Story

Chance 2



Chance 2

Another pain rips through you. You scream in agony, hoping that someone will hear and come to your rescue. You know that if no one comes, you will die but you cannot move. Soon, you hear footsteps outside and people talking at the door. At last, some women come inside and finding you in pain, they move into action and check on the status of your labor.

You want it to all go away, but you feel your baby pulsing in between your legs and you know you must be strong.

“Push! Push!” a woman shouts.

You push and an indescribable explosion tears your abdomen and it is like fire is pouring out of your legs.

“Push!” all the women say again.

You feel something slide out, and then, as if in the distance, you think you hear small animal noises, like something has been injured. Then you realize it is the sound of your baby crying. You wait for the child to be placed in your arms, but you hear voices and see people rushing around you as though you are in a dream. Your baby cries again, and that is the last sound you ever hear. Due to over bleeding, the women cannot save your life. That is how you depart from the world.

THE END

This is the end of this version of Kemi’s story. Take a few minutes to sit quietly and reflect on Kemi’s experience. When you are ready, ask the facilitator for another woman’s story.



Kemi's Story

Friends & Neighbors 1





Friends & Neighbors 1

Somehow, you muster the strength to go outside. The first person you see is one of the soldier's children who goes for help. A few women come and take you to the bush where you deliver your first baby. It is a boy. As his head comes out and you hear his first cries, you feel that maybe after producing new life, you will have a better chance at yours.

The baby's father does not care much for him, even if he is a boy. Nor does he seem pleased with you for giving him a son. He shocks you by demanding sex only a few nights after you have given birth. Your wound, which was sewn shut by one of the women at the birth, is still tender, and you are sure this act will finally kill you, but there is only a small bleed when he finishes.

By the weekend you have to leave the camp again and walk for many hours waiting for the men and children to raid the villages before you can resettle. You know it is horrible, what they are doing to the people. You were once in their shoes. But now the raids are your only source of food, and you have come to rely on them. It is during the raiding of villages and staying out in the cold for so long that your baby falls sick. He is coughing and shaking and his small body rattles in your arms. You approach your husband and show him your son, whose body is slowly changing color. He shoos you away. That night you hold him to your chest and sing the lullaby your parents used to soothe you with, determined to save him at any cost.

If you decide to take advantage of everyone's exhaustion from the raid and try to escape, go to Chance and take card 3.

If you decide to remain with the rebels for fear of death, go to Carry On and take card 1.



Kemi's Story

Carry On 1



Carry On 1

Your son's life is hanging in the balance when the group stops to make another temporary camp. A kind woman takes pity on you and shows you how to make chest compresses from local herbs. Now that you are not moving and can keep the baby warm and well-fed, he slowly begins to improve.

You realize that life is not going to change, and you begin to resolve yourself to the challenges and disappointments. Soon, you decide to become the best rebel wife you can be. You ask your husband to teach you how to fight and defend yourself. He is uncertain, but you reassure him that it is just so that you can protect your child and the house when he is away.

In time you learn how to use a gun and develop good aim. Sometimes you are even allowed to take part in the raids with the others. Your fear of killing disappears and you relish the spoils a raid produces. More children are recruited to join the rebels and you are given a leadership position, teaching younger girls how to be good wives and strong defenders.

Life goes on. Your husband beats you less frequently, and even his demands for sex decrease. As time passes, he acquires younger girls as his wives, and even though this is not the life you chose, it is the life that has been dealt you.

THE END

This is the end of this version of Kemi's story. Take a few minutes to sit quietly and reflect on Kemi's experience. When you are ready, ask the facilitator for another woman's story.



Kemi's Story

Chance 3



Chance 3

This is a perfect opportunity for you to escape. You hold your son tightly to your chest and run as fast as your legs can carry you because you know that if you get caught, you will surely be killed. There are many who have tried to escape the rebels who were killed mercilessly. You are so exhausted. It is only by chance that you come across a driver that offers you a lift to the town.

When you stop, he asks you for sex but you are strong and have learned a bit of self-defense during your days as a rebel wife. You kick him twice and run away while he is sprawled on the ground.

You take your son to the overcrowded hospital for treatment, and in time he grows stronger. The first few weeks in town are very hard for you because you have no food or money and you can only beg.

Despite trying, you cannot find work, and you must rely on begging or the kindness of strangers to provide for your son. You live in constant fear and worry, unsure of how you will survive each day.

THE END

This is the end of this version of Kemi's story. Take a few minutes to sit quietly and reflect on her experience. When you are ready, ask the facilitator for another woman's story.