



Amina's Story Identity



Identity

I am Amina and I am 18 years old. I am tall and have long hair, but it is always covered by my hijab. My mother made sure that all of her children got an education even though it is rare for girls like me to go to school. My parents are so kind, but they are growing old. My father is a chief in the village and my mother is an important woman who used to counsel girls who were about to get married. My brother and sister are younger than I am, but we all used to study, play, and work together. That was before all the trouble started. I was almost through with secondary when we all had to stop going to school because of the growing conflict that has been going on in the area where we live.

For a long time, villages all over the region have been under attack by rebels. We lived in fear that we too could be attacked at any time. Each night we prayed to Allah to save us from bloodshed and war, but our prayers were not answered. When the war finally came to our village, huts were pillaged and burned. Our neighbors were killed. My father and brother disappeared after the attack and we could only conclude that they had been forced to join the rebel forces. I knew that my father, being old, would not survive. My mother, sister, and I, together with many others, have decided to flee to the neighboring country. We know that this is where many people are going to seek refuge. We don't know what awaits us when we get there...

Go to Violence Strikes and take card 1.



Amina's Story

Violence Strikes 1



Violence Strikes 1

The journey to the border is an ordeal you will never forget. There are many of you, and the sharp stones make walking difficult. You pray that you will see your father and brother. It is not safe to rest so you keep moving. Many people who fall prey to hunger and fatigue are left behind.

Your sister is walking ahead with other girls her age when suddenly you hear an explosion. You see your sister fly up in the air and crash down. The leaders had warned you about landmines. She is barely alive. You try to carry her but she is too heavy. The leader advises you to leave her behind. The decision is agonizing. How can you just leave your sister to die? Eventually, an older woman who is also lagging behind agrees to stay and care for her, following behind until they reach the camp. You can only believe that your sister will be okay, and you pull your mother away wailing.

When you reach the border, a uniformed man ushers you into a small room and closes the door. "Remove your clothes if you wish to enter," he states. You cry out and shake your head. "Now!" he thunders. You try to run but you are trapped. He throws you against the wall and yanks down your skirts. Just as he begins to thrusts himself against you, someone outside screams, "Hurry up, the next one is coming." Angrily, the man shoves you away and tells you to get out. You scurry to arrange yourself and run out, not at all certain that you will be safe in this country.

If you want to forget the incident when you arrive at the camp, go to Carry On and take card 1.

If you want to talk to some of your village mates and see if they faced similar problems, go to Friends & Neighbors and take card 1.



Amina's Story

Carry On 1



Carry On 1

At the camp all of you are placed in tents which have been donated by international agencies. Each day you notice the strength draining from your mother. She is too tired to stand in line, so you wait alone to receive a food card for your family. When it is your turn, the man at the front refuses to give you a card, saying that only male family members can obtain one. You protest that you are alone with your mother and that she is too sick to come. The man interrupts and tells you to go speak to your sheikh.

Before you can follow up, you try to wake your mother one morning and she does not respond. You bend down and feel no heartbeat.

The next few weeks are some of the saddest and loneliest you have ever known. You ask your sheikh daily whether anyone new has arrived, praying desperately for your sister. One morning, just when you are about to give up hope, you see her name on a registration list! You run to go find her and the elderly woman in a nearby block.

You are overjoyed to be reunited with your only remaining family member. You cry as she tells you the story of how she and the kind woman made it to camp. She is visibly weak and the wound from the landmine has affected her movement. She needs medical attention, and you both desperately need food.

If you want to seek medical assistance, go to Medical Care and take card 1.

If you want to ask your sheikh for help, go to Cultural Leader and take card 1.



Amina's Story

Friends & Neighbors 1



Friends & Neighbors 1

As you wander around your block in the camp, you find other girls from your village and talk secretly about what happened at the border. Everyone suffered, but they tell you to keep quiet and forget it because you don't want to make trouble for yourself.

You and your mother do not receive a food card because they are distributing them to male heads of household only. In the tent, you live under the harshest and loneliest conditions you have ever known before your mother finally dies. The anguish you feel is indescribable. You think about your sister every day and pray to Allah that she has survived and that you will be reunited someday. When you are about to give up hope, you see a familiar figure waiting in a crowded line ahead. You are beside yourself with joy. You know that your sister has come back to you.

Your sister is very weak from the landmine blast so you take her to your tent. She tells you how she made it to the border step by step with the other woman. The news of your mother's death causes her to cry inconsolably. Your only comfort is being at each other's side again. She prays to Allah five times a day, reciting passages from the Koran. But she still needs medical attention and you both need more food.

If you decide to look for treatment for your sister, go to Medical Care and take card 1.

If you decide to seek help from your sheikh, go to Cultural Leader and take card 1.



Amina's Story

Medical Care 1

The illustration on the left side of the page shows a woman from the back, wearing a red headscarf. She is looking towards a wall that features a vertical strip of circular patterns. Each circle contains a different colored segment (yellow, green, blue, red) and is surrounded by a textured, wavy border. The background of the wall is a light, textured grey.

Medical Care 1

The next morning, your sister is too weak to move, so you go to the makeshift medical tent to find help. You know that if she does not see a doctor soon, she may die. The small place is filled with people. Many patients are lying on the ground wherever they can find space. Some are crying as they wait for medical attention. You wonder how you are going to get someone's attention because the medical personnel are rushing here and there. When you finally manage to speak to one of them about your sister, he looks at you like you are crazy. He waves his hand around the tent and tells you that he has much more urgent cases to attend to. After all, your sister herself has not even come to seek treatment. You try to explain that she is too weak to move, but he orders you to stop. As you beg him for help, he shoves you aside and accuses you of wasting his time.

You don't know how you are going to return to your sister empty-handed. Desperate, you weigh your options but realize there aren't any before you. Perhaps, you think, your sheikh can help you.

If you decide to go back to your sister, go to Family and take card 1.

If you want to talk to your sheikh, go to Cultural Leader and take card 1.



Amina's Story

Family 1



Family 1

You don't know how to face your sister since you did not manage to get any medicine to help her. When you arrive back at the tent, she is waiting anxiously.

"I'm so sorry. I have brought nothing. The medical tent is so busy. The man said you must come there with me." You bow your head because you are afraid you may begin to cry.

"Don't worry Amina, you tried your best." your sister responds. "I will be okay as long as we continue praying to Allah for support and trust His will."

You are amazed at your sister's faith and determination. But you know you must do something to improve her condition soon. You are only receiving scraps of food left over from others and it is not enough for you both to eat. You can feel yourself growing weak and know your sister is in worse condition than she says.

You don't know where else to go but to your sheikh.

Go to Cultural Leader and take card 1.



Amina's Story

Cultural Leader 1



Cultural Leader 1

Your sheikh is very busy managing the needs of your community members living in the camp. You find him one day as he is walking outside, and he warns you that he does not have much time. You quickly explain to him your dire situation and he listens to you as he walks. He expresses his sympathy but tells you that the camp is very large and there are many people who are hungry and in need of basic supplies. He promises to put your name on a list and says you should start to receive food very soon.

Many days pass and you and your sister still do not receive any food, soap, or other necessities. You depend on the kindness of others and barter what you can, but it is not enough, especially with your sister being so sick.

One of your friends tells you that a man in your block who comes from a neighboring village volunteers with an NGO that distributes supplies. She suggests that you ask him for help. His name is Muhammad. You are hopeful that finally you may receive the help you need but you do not know that your troubles are just beginning...

Go to Violence Strikes and take card 2.



Amina's Story

Violence Strikes 2



Violence Strikes 2

A friend points out the NGO volunteer to you the next day. You feel nervous, but gather the courage to approach him when he is standing alone. You tell him about the horrible things that have happened to you since you began your journey, crying a little when you talk about your mother's death. He pats you on the back and you feel comforted.

You ask him if he could help you to get a few things like food, blankets, and soap. He smiles kindly and assures you that he can provide these things for you. "But," he says, "I cannot be seen giving you the supplies since you are not on the distribution lists. You will have to meet me in the bush after dark so that I can give them to you in secret."

You agree to meet him the next night just beyond the water point. When you arrive, it is already very dark and you are shivering. You call out for him and he responds, telling you to walk further. When you finally reach him, you see him holding only one small bar of soap. "Muhammad, where are the rest of the things you promised me?" you ask, confused. Muhammad smiles and asks if you really expect to get something for nothing. He tells you that there is one thing you can offer in exchange for his supplies. You think about running away, but then imagine another day without food. Instead, you do what he asks, all the while praying to Allah to forgive you.

You begin meeting Muhammad regularly in the bush. You and your sister are eating better, but you are struggling to live with what you are doing.

If after awhile, you decide to go to the medical tent to check for any sexually transmitted infections, go to Medical Care and take card 2.

If you decide to talk to your sister about what is happening, go to Family and take card 2.



Amina's Story

Family 2

A woman wearing a red headscarf is shown in profile, looking towards the left. She is positioned in front of a piece of fabric with a repeating pattern of circular motifs. Each motif consists of a central circle with a smaller circle inside, surrounded by concentric lines and dots. The background is a solid light blue color.

Family 2

Your sister is so grateful for the food and blankets and other supplies that you have managed to get, but she does not know the pain you are suffering to secure these things. She continues to pray and tell you that Allah will always be with you. You wonder how she can have such faith when you feel like you are living in hell.

As time passes, you continue to feel worse and worse. After many months of doing what you must to survive, you cannot take it anymore. When you are lying down to go to sleep one night, you break down in tears. You try to muffle your sobs, but your sister hears you and asks what is wrong. You cannot keep your secret any longer, and you tell her about what you have been doing with Muhammad. She weeps at your revelation and begs Allah to forgive you. You feel so badly for burdening your sister with the truth. She asks you to stop meeting Muhammad, but you know that without him, you and your sister will not survive. You don't know what to do.

If you decide to see a doctor because you are worried about your health, go to Medical Care and take card 2.

If you decide to talk to one of your village mates go to Friends & Neighbors and take card 2.



Amina's Story

Medical Care 2

The illustration on the left side of the page shows a woman from the back, wearing a red headscarf. She is looking towards a wall that is covered in a pattern of overlapping circles. Each circle contains a different colored, textured pattern, including shades of blue, green, and yellow. The overall style is a simple line drawing with flat colors.

Medical Care 2

The medical tent is overcrowded as usual. Patients are lined up outside in the hot, musty air. At last, you are brought to see a nurse. She has a gruff voice and says that your matter better be serious because she is extremely busy and tired.

“Please, can you check to see if I am sick? I may have an infection.”

The woman glares at you disapprovingly as she takes your blood and is rough with your body as she handles you. When she finishes, she sends you back to the reception and tells you to wait.

She returns with your test results a few hours later, and you are devastated to hear that you have a very serious infection which has been “sexually transmitted.” She tells you that there is no cure and that you must live with the shame for the rest of your life. She then begins lecturing you about safe sex and protection, but you hardly hear her because you are so upset. Just before she sends you away, she suggests that you go to the women’s center that an NGO has set up to help young women like you.

If you take her advice and go to the women’s center, go to NGO and take card 1.

If you decide to go back to your tent and think things through, go to Carry On and take card 2.



Amina's Story

NGO 1



NGO 1

You decide to go to the women's center but you want to bring your sister with you. Maybe they will be able to help both of you. When you show up at the large, shaded center, there are many women of all ages moving about. You and your sister wander around for awhile before someone approaches you and asks how she can help you. You shrug your shoulders, telling her that you are not sure. The woman tells you that they offer many activities at the center but that registration for the next session does not begin until tomorrow afternoon. She leaves you before you can ask her more.

You feel a bit discouraged, but you return the next day with your sister. This time, you are met by a kind woman who listens to your story patiently and tells you not to worry. She says they are here to help and that they offer a number of opportunities for young women like you. Your sister is interested in taking some classes at the center. You ask to learn more about getting a job like the one she has with an organization. She tells you that she is a volunteer and that they do not have any other positions available. However, the organization is running a training for women who wish to help other refugees who have just entered the camp. She says she can sign you up for the training. She also tells you that she will speak to your sheikh's wife to tell her that you are not receiving food and see if she can help.

You feel so lucky that you found her. You have no idea what is about to happen...

Go to Violence Strikes and take card 3.



Amina's Story

Friends & Neighbors 2



Friends & Neighbors 2

You usually enjoy spending time with some of the other girls from your village who live in your block in the camp. It reminds you of happier times before the conflict. But this time when you approach the other girls, you are nervous. You feel you need to confide in someone who will help you find another way to stay alive, but you are afraid of what they will say.

After gossiping about people you know in the camp for a few minutes, you ask your most trusted friend to help you gather firewood. When you are far enough away from the others, you tell your friend that you have been keeping a bad secret. She immediately grows quiet as you tell her about your desperation and how you felt forced to meet Muhammad in the bush in order to survive. She gasps in surprise and looks at you with wide eyes. She does not know how to respond, and you say that you just hope Allah can understand and forgive you. Finally, she speaks to you, “Amina, you must stop doing those things. It is very bad, and Allah will not forgive you.” You look down in shame and plead quietly, “But what else can I do to get the food and supplies my sister and I need? We are all alone, and we cannot get a food card. I am the only one looking after us.”

Your friend tells you that she cannot help but that there is a women’s center that her mother sometimes goes to. She says that there are many people there working for organizations and that maybe you could go there. You are weary because you have not been helped anywhere else you have gone, but you realize you are out of options.

Go to NGO and take card 1.



Amina's Story

Carry on 2



Carry On 2

You return to your tent, deep in thought. You feel overwhelmed by what you learned at the medical tent, and you cannot understand how your life has come to this point. Even your sister's nightly prayer does not comfort you. Instead, you remain silent and go to sleep after eating supper.

Your sister can tell that you are more upset than usual and asks you what happened at the medical tent. You cry freely as you tell her that you are sick and that it will never go away. You will carry your shame forever. Your sister shudders in horror and tells you that you must promise you will never see Muhammad again. You are in such despair that you agree, although you cannot imagine how you will get food and other supplies for yourself and your sister without him.

Days pass, and you do very little. You know that Muhammad will come looking for you soon and you cannot face him. The food and soap you have been storing are running out and you don't know how you are going to survive when they are gone. You don't think things can get worse...

Go to Violence Strikes and take card 3.



Amina's Story

Violence Strikes 3



Violence Strikes 3

A few days later, you are walking through the camp when one of your old friends from the village comes running toward you, “Amina! Amina!” she pants, out of breath. She pulls you aside and talks quietly under her breath. “Have you heard? Someone told the sheikh about what you were doing with Muhammad, and now everyone in our block is talking about it.”

You are in such shock that you cannot respond. How could this have happened? Who could have told? You race back to your tent to hide while you figure things out, but it is too late. When you get nearer to your block, people begin to stare at you, and you can hear everyone whispering. Some do not even whisper at you, but shout cruel names and tell you that you should be ashamed of yourself.

Muhammad is waiting for you when you reach your tent, and he is furious, “What were you thinking, Amina? How could you have let this happen? You are such a stupid prostitute!” he screams and he pushes you down onto the ground. He then spits in your face and storms out of the tent. Your sister walks in behind him and kneels down, wiping your face. She begins to pray, and it is all you can do to lie quietly beside her and offer up your own silent prayers.

If you want to speak to your sheikh to see if he can help, go to Cultural Leader and take card 2.

If you feel there is nothing to be done, go to Carry On and take card 3.



Amina's Story

Cultural Leader 2



Cultural Leader 2

It does not take long for you to find your sheikh because he is already looking for you. “Please, please, can you help me?” you plead after greeting him. “People are spreading horrible rumors about me.”

“Amina, you should be ashamed of yourself. These rumors you speak of...are they true? Were you doing what everyone says you were doing?” You close your eyes and begin praying in your head. You cannot lie to your sheikh. When you open your eyes, he is staring intently at you, and you whisper, “Yes.”

“I cannot hear you child, what do you say?” he thunders. You reply in a tiny voice, “Yes. It is true. But I had no choice. My sister and I had nothing, no one. What else could I have done?”

The sheikh puts up his hand to stop you. “You have brought great shame to your family, to our community, and to Allah. You cannot stay here with us anymore. No one will ever be able to marry you at this camp now. I am sending you and your sister to another camp where they will not know your shameful history. You will be lucky to find a man there.”

You don’t try to protest because you know the sheikh’s word is final. You and your sister pack your few belongings and soon find yourself walking into the unknown again. You can’t stop crying and apologizing. Although your sister tells you that it is not your fault and that Allah is with you, you cannot help feeling like you’ve ruined both of your lives.

THE END

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



Amina's Story

Carry On 3



Carry On 3

Time passes slowly as you become the talk of the camp. At first everyone is mocking you, pointing, or calling out rude names. But soon the criticism turns to scorn. People stop speaking to you or even looking in your direction. No one wants to stand near you at the water point, no one joins you to wash clothes, and no one shares their food.

Your supplies are almost finished, and you fear that you and your sister will die once you run out of food. You have started to spend most of the day inside the tent, only going outside when your sister needs your help. She has also grown weary, as the community is shunning her too. She doesn't pray to Allah as much, and she has even stopped trying to convince you that what happened is not your fault.

You are washing your clothes just beyond the water point one afternoon, hanging things to dry on some low branches in the bush surrounding the camp. You walk a few meters inside, thinking about whether you and your sister will make it out of the camp alive when your foot hits a sharp, metal object. A loud blast is the last thing you hear as the landmine explodes.

THE END

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