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Weaving a Web of Support for Widows Worldwide

Shots by the Roadside

by Rose Adongo

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My husband died in 1988 – he was shot during the time of insurgency in Pallisa District. It was during the night but not late. We were drinking local brew called ajono, just outside our house. I was with him and his sister. We heard some men talking by the roadside and he stood up to go and find out who they were. Those days there were so many wrong doers, such as thieves, walking about in the night. I begged him not to go. Many people walked at night, carrying guns. His sister joined me in begging him not to go but he insisted that he wanted to find out who the men were.

This all happened in such a short time. We tried to hold him but he overpowered us and went after the men. He asked them who they were and why they were walking in the night. We heard two gunshots and each one of us ran away. I hid in a nearby bush and after sometime I came out. I went and called my brother-in-law and explained what happened. We went to the roadside and there was my husband lying in a pool of blood, dead.

He left me with four young children. I stayed in the compound, keeping my house and the house of my only brother-in law. He and his wife were both teachers and they were teaching away from Pallisa. In 2003, my mother-in-law who was also living in the same compound, fell sick. She was bedridden for a year and according to the clan law, I had to look after her.

When my mother-in-law passed away, my brother-in-law told me to leave the compound, because I was no longer useful to them. My only son who would have defended me is away in the city trying to find a living. When my daughters tried to defend me, they were told that women have no voice in society and should keep quiet and do what they are told to do. I was showed a small piece of land where I could construct a hut and was told to move away as soon as possible. I tried to take my case to the clan leaders but they told me that as a sign of respect to the clan and to her dead husband, a widow must do what she is told to do.

At the moment, I live in a small hut with two of my youngest children. I am 48

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years old. These two children do not belong to my late husband; they belong to one of his cousins. I accepted them to inherit me so that I could remain in the compound and look after my other children. I am struggling to look after these two little ones with no help at all from their father. I thank God for my elder sister who took me to a family planning clinic, otherwise, by now I would be having five or six other children and I do not know how life would be. Even with these two, life is quite hard. My youngest daughter, the one from my late husband, left home and went to live with a man. She said she would j get married to any man who could look after her and make her life worthwhile. She got married, not because she wanted to, but because of the poverty at home.

Comments or inquiries about this story?

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