

Rose's story

"Rose", age 10, at her home in Nairobi, Kenya, just down the road from where she and her three girlfriends were raped in July 2005. It is Monday afternoon, and most children Rose's age are in class. But like many school-aged rape victims, Rose has refused to go to school since being assaulted two months earlier. "The teachers will beat me," she says. "They will beat me and laugh at me, and the other children will laugh at me. They know what happened.

"One afternoon, four of us were playing outside by the road, and a local vendor offered us some *mandazi* [fried dough]. We always saw him making and selling *mandazi*. He lives close to us, with his wife and kids. The man told us that he was not feeling well, that he was sick and couldn't eat any *mandazi* that day. He said that we could have them, and that we should go and eat them at his home.

"One of the girls went with him. Then he told us, 'I do not have any water in the house. Please go and get water for me.' We each took a Jerrican and went to get water. He asked us to take it into the house. When we were all inside, he locked the window and locked the door. Then he told us to take off our clothes. We started screaming. He went and got a knife. He said, 'Be quiet! Be quiet!' He said he would cut us if we did not stop screaming. We did not want to be killed, so we kept quiet. He undressed the first girl and told her to lay on the bed. He told us three to stand in front of the bed and watch. Then he slept with her. When he finished he picked the next girl, who refused to undress. When she refused, he told her he would stab her. So the man undressed her. He finished with the second girl, and she got dressed. I was the third person. ... When my turn came I started feeling afraid. I refused to take off my clothes. When he said he would stab me I was scared. ... He used force with the last girl. Afterwards, he opened the door and warned us that if he heard about what had happened from anyone in the community, he would kill us."

Rose did not return home until 9 p.m. that night, and her mother had been worried. When asked where she had been, Rose talked about the man, but was vague about what had occurred and reluctant to admit that she herself had been raped. At first, none of the girls disclosed exactly what had happened to them. When one of them was asked why she was walking funny, she said that she had been kicked in the leg. The mother of the fourth girl noticed some bleeding from her daughter, a result of the force the rapist used. Eventually, when their story was pieced together, the father of one of the girls took them to the police station to report the rapes and to identify the perpetrator, who admitted to "having the urge to have sex" but denied having penetrated the girls. The four girls were treated at Nairobi Women's Hospital, where they were underwent forensic examinations. The perpetrator was arrested and held in remand until the trial in October 2005.

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In this photo, Rose holds the syringe she uses to take antiretroviral medication to reduce her chances of contracting HIV from the rape. The treatment will last four months. Before the assaults, one of the four girls already was enrolled in a community health programme for children who are HIV-positive.