

Finding Malu: Restoring Family Links Program Reconnects Family Separated By Conflict



Franck Mputu Beya and Kazadi “Ray” Ntambwe smile with their Restoring Family Links caseworker Muneera Didarali. She helped Franck reconnect with his sister after eight years.

(NAPS)—Franck Mputu Beya recalls sunny days in the Democratic Republic of the Congo—cutting his siblings’ hair in the shade of the veranda. Happy family moments which ended when an escalation of violence in the Kasai region displaced 1.4 million people, including Beya’s family.

“They were killing everybody, and I made the decision to run,” he recalls.

Beya’s first stop was the capital city of the Kasai-Central province, Kananga, where the hobby he once used to spend time with his family became his livelihood.

“I worked every day from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., saving money until I had enough to leave Congo. When I left my country, I didn’t know where my parents were or where my sister was,” Beya said. “Even today, I don’t know if they killed my parents.”

He was 26 when he emigrated to the U.S. after spending 11 months at a detention center in California. He was young, did not yet speak English and was all alone.

A friend, whom Beya met in the detention center, bought him a bus ticket to Maine where he met a Congolese trucker that claimed to have contact with his great uncle, Kazadi “Ray” Ntambwe.

Ntambwe arrived in the U.S. in 1997, retiring from a career with the military. People, he says, go missing from the Congo all the time, but when he caught wind of the violence in 2016, he started to worry.

“I was wondering about them,” Ntambwe said. “People go missing there all the time.”

When contact was finally made between the two, Beya immediately joined Ntambwe in Dallas, Texas, where they initiated a Restoring Family Links case with the American Red Cross.

Through the program, the Red Cross leverages a network of 191 Red Cross and Red Crescent societies worldwide to help people reconnect with their loved ones when they are separated by events such as armed conflict, natural disasters or migration.

Beya and Ntambwe’s case was assigned to Muneera Didarali, a lead caseworker volunteer with the Red Cross North Texas Region, who completed an elaborate tracing form and connected with the Red Cross society of the nation in question to begin a search.



Beya’s sister Malu currently lives at Tongogara Refugee Camp with her three children.

“The process is very long,” Didarali said. “We tell people it’s going to take a minimum of six months to a year. I say this to everyone.”

Beya’s case took over three years.

It was four in the morning when he received a call from the Red Cross in Zimbabwe, letting him know they had found his sister Malu.

“Hello?” a familiar female voice whispered.

“Hello?” a familiar male voice responded.

“Is that you, big brother?”

“It’s me. Is that you little sister?”

Beya could hear her sobs on the other side.

“We didn’t talk for maybe 3-4 minutes,” he said. “She was just crying. There were a lot of emotions on this day.”

“What I can say right now is how happy we are to unify the family through the Red Cross,” says his uncle. “I’m telling the world, if you miss your family, give your case to the Red Cross.”

Looking for a family member internationally?

Armed conflict, international disasters and migration leave millions of people around the globe in urgent need of humanitarian assistance every year. Restoring Family Links provides free and confidential services to help families reconnect following international crises, including the situation in Syria.

To begin a search, contact a local Red Cross chapter—the critical link to the vast global Red Cross Red Crescent network. You may also call 844-782-9441 or use the International Reconnecting Families Inquiry Form.