

At lunchtime we heard gunshots

Josephine, 18 years old, was interviewed in September 2010 in Niangara Territory, Oriental Province, by Oxfam staff.

“At lunchtime we heard gunshots. We left the house as quickly as possible. It was too late. A group of about 80 LRA men arrived and encircled us. They tied us up and then shot and killed my grandfather right in front of me. They took me and my three brothers into the bush, leaving behind my mother and grandmother. After an hour of walking they separated us and I was left with my 14-year-old brother Patrick. My two other brothers were never seen again.

I was held by the LRA for eight months. We were always on the move. I was forced to carry heavy loads, find food, and cook. Girls like me, some as young as 12, were forced to become the ‘wives’ of the LRA men. I was assigned to a boy who was actually Congolese like me and had also been kidnapped but

was now a LRA fighter. I was finally able to escape one day when I was sent out to look for food. When the LRA fighters who were accompanying us fell asleep, I and another girl ran away. We walked 40 kilometres and finally arrived to safety in a village in Sudan. Patrick escaped two months after me.

I don’t know if I have HIV because there is no HIV testing clinic in Niangara. We now live as displaced people in a town where there are some UN peacekeepers so we feel safer but at our village there is no one to protect us. Until the UN comes to our area, it is too dangerous for us to access our fields and so we go hungry.”

