

Captions :

ALBINO KILLINGS IN TANZANIA

Photography by
Franck VOGEL
Tanzania - 2009



Photo 01 -

In the Tanzania Albino Society office, newspapers articles that deal with recent albino killings are displayed on the walls. Here is one about Mariam Standord, 28, from the Kagera region. October 18th, 2008, was a nightmare for her..."They cut off her arms!", tells Mathew Michael. "They cut us in pieces for the stupid witchdoctors and their rich clients who want to get always richer! Even if it's risky, poor people are doing the dirty work for \$ 2.000 an albino arm. A real business. Sometimes people make fun of me in the streets and say: 'we can get a lot of money with you, you know!'"



Photo 02 -

Ngeme Luhahula, 51, prays every day on her daughter's grave in Ilungu village. Vumilia Makoye was killed in front of her at the age of 17 in May 2008. To avoid desecration, she was buried where she was murdered: in her house, which was then destroyed. The family built a new one just near the grave to protect it. Albino bodies have recently been unearthed to remove arms and legs. The government is supposed to seal albino graves with cement but Ngeme is still waiting.

Yussuf Elias, 26, lives in the same village in Lake Victoria Region. In November 2007, Rebecca Machungwa, 10, was killed and her legs chopped off with a machete. Later in May 2008 came Vumilia Makoye's turn. Today, Yussuf is scared to death: "I'm the next one on the list! Since Vumilia's death, I always carry a whistle with me...it's my only protection."



Photo 03 -

Yussuf Elias, 26, lives in Ilungu in the Lake Victoria Region, where witchcraft and albino killings are the most important. There was 3 albinos at the end of 2007. In November 2007, Rebecca Machungwa, 10, was killed and her legs chopped off with a machete. Then in May 2008 came Vumilia Makoye's turn. She was 17.

Today, Yussuf is scared to death: "I'm the next one on the list! Since Vumilia's death, I always carry a whistle with me... it's my only protection".



Photo 04 -

Juma Ramazani, 38, is a farmer from Tabora. To save his life, doctors from the Ocean Road Cancer Institute in Dar-es-Salaam cut off his left arm. It could have been for witchcraft, but that time they burn the ill part to prevent from thieves..."How will I keep on working in my fields?"...He still lives with his parents.

The Ocean Road Cancer Institute in Dar-es-Salaam is the only place in Tanzania where they treat cancer. Albino life expectancy in only 30 years old...



Photo 05 -

In Tanzania, in the Lake Victoria area, witchdoctors are very popular and respected by many tribes and especially Sukumas. Over 80 percent of the people visit witchdoctors for cancer treatment, AIDS or to find love...or to get rich, which is the main reason they need albino body parts. Since 2007, over 45 albino have been killed and mainly children. A leg, an arm or albino blood is worth \$ 2.000 each...that means an albino body is worth \$10.000 for a male and even \$12.000 for a female. Prices that equals 10 years of a farmer's salary.

Witchdoctors use body parts to make magic powders, potions to locate gold. Rich businessmen visit them after buying a mining land... Since they don't have albino body parts, witchdoctor can provide them with it for \$ 2.000. Vicky Ntetema from the BBC revealed the case in an undercover investigation using a hidden video camera in which she filmed such an offer. Witchdoctors and even some State Ministers threat to kill her... it is not that surprising: they also visit witchdoctors before elections.

Mohamed Maulid is a witchdoctor from Mburahati village, about 30 km from Dar-es-Salaam. He admits that some "Sukuma colleagues" use albino body parts but only in the Mwanza region. He adds: "I'm not a Sukuma and I don't agree with them".



Photo 06 -

Bibiana Mbushi, 10, experienced hell one night of January 2008. After her parents died of AIDS, she was adopted with her 2 sisters (Tindi, 7, and also albino, and Sikujuwa) by her aunt but her uncle was very displeased. It is known that albinos bring shame to one's family and this is felt as a holly punishment. When he got a chance to sell them, he took it. Early January 2008 at 10 pm three men armed with a machete and a torch entered the children's room and told the children that they were police officers and that they had to take something. Bibiana was the first to appear to them - luckily they didn't know that the two girls were albino - one man ran to her and quickly chopped her right leg and 2 fingers off. All children, terrified, started to cry... Tindi, hidden in the dark room told me she saw a man leaving the house with her sister's leg on his shoulder. The uncle was arrested and put in jail but the 3 murderers are still free.

Bibiana is one of the only albino that survived such an attack thanks to an ambulance from the Geita hospital. While visiting Bibiana in the hospital, albino MP Al-Shaymaa Kwegyir decided to adopt her and her 2 sisters. They are now in a school near Mwanza. Tindi has already many friends but Bibiana is still very shy and fear to be sold again...



Photo 07 -

Ngasamo gold mine was operated by the Germans until World War II. A terrible water-flood killed over 200 workers in the mine, which was closed right away. In the 1990s, businessmen bought some land and started to operate the mine but in a traditional way. They went to witchdoctors to get information on the digging. Unfortunately, witchdoctors need albino blood, leg or arm for that...If one doesn't have it, the witchdoctor can provide it for \$ 2.000. An albino body is worth up to \$ 10.000 (including blood, worth also \$ 2.000). Vicky Ntetema, BBC reporter, revealed the case after investigating under the cover of a business woman. "Witchdoctors share albino body parts within their Eastern African network, and work with bribed policemen", reveals Vicky. "Politicians and even the Minister of Home Affairs seems to take part in it!" She is now death threatened by witchdoctors and even politicians...The Interior Minister told her during a flight and in front of albino MP and a Canadian-Norwegian delegation: "Shame on you! You brought shame to your country!"



Photo 08 -

In Tanzania, in the Lake Victoria region, witchdoctors recommend to throw albino hair in fishnets to get more fish. In Igombe, near Mwanza, some fishermen follow that principle and say it works. They get or buy albino hair from hairdressers... The Nile perch has been introduced in the lake 50 years ago and can weigh up to 100 kilos.

Most villagers don't have boats so they use huge nets they pull to the shore.



Photo 09 -

Ali Omali, 25, lives in Vikindu, a village located 50 km away from Dar-es-Salaam, and refuses to rely on people's generosity... Unlike many albinos, he is not begging and prefers to work hard and to earn his own money by working in his fields. Now cousins and uncles are asking him for help ! A lesson about life.

Ali has a black girlfriend and a little non-albino girl. He plans to marry her soon. That's why he works so hard, often after lunch when the sun is at its highest point, and without any sunscreen on... too expensive. Albino life expectancy is around 30 years old.



Photo 10 -

Gaston Mcheka, 34, is a freelance journalist and lives with his wife Pamela, also albino, and their 3 children (Viktor, Isaac and Joshua) in a little house in a poor suburb of Dar-es-Salaam. The children are all black because their parents have 2 different type of albinism (Type 1 and 2). Those 2 genes are recessive. A few months ago, a tumor appeared... skin cancer. He knows he is going to die soon.

Gaston is also General Secretary for the "Albino United", the Dar-es-Salaam albino soccer team. They train 6 times a week near the Ocean Road Cancer Institute and TAS office (Tanzania Albino Society). Every weekend they play games and the last one against the Aga Khan's team was a huge success: they won 7-0.



Photo 11 -

Barak Focus, 11, lives in Bugollo village in the Mwanza area. Recently 4 albino from his village have been killed. His father, Murungu, took him and his best friend on a 16 hour bus trip to Dar-es-Salaam to get skin cancer treatment. Barak's serenity contrasts with his father's fear: "I knew he was not supposed to go in the sun but he was always running around!"

The Ocean Road Cancer Institute in Dar-es-Salaam is the only place in Tanzania that can help him but his father knows that his life is almost over. Albino life expectancy in only 30 years old...



Photo 12 -

Al-Shaymaa Kwegyir, the albino MP nominated by the Tanzanian President, organized with the Egyptian Embassy a lunch for nearly 200 Albino in Dar-es-Salaam on March 25th, 2009. Sunscreen, hats, shirts have been provided to all of the albinos to protect them from the sun. Because of their skin color and their vision problems, they are excluded and few have real jobs. To help them coming to the meeting, each albino got 2000 Tsh (about \$1.5) for bus fares.



Photo 13 -

Japhet Felix dresses his son Camillius, 3. For albino men it is rare to see them with dyed hair, Japhet is an exception. He feels better like that. With their boy, they live in Kiwalani, a poor suburb of Dar-es-Salaam near the airport. Japhet is a construction worker and Agnellar makes scarves.



Photo 14 -

Pamela, 29, is married to Gaston Mcheka, 34 who is also albino. They live with their 3 children (Viktor, Isaac and Joshua) in a little house in the poor suburbs of Dar-es-Salaam. The children are all black because their parents have 2 different type of albinism (Type 1 and 2). Those 2 genes are recessive. They experience a difficult life but remain happy: she likes to dye her hair in black..."I'm more beautiful like that !"



Photo 15 -

"Under the Same Sun" has been founded by rich Canadian albino Peter Ash (on the left, with his brother) to help people with albinism worldwide. At the end of 2008, he heard about the albino killings in Tanzania and decided to do something. He called Samuel Mluge (seen from behind), who was at the time General Secretary of the Tanzania Albino Society and they decided to open an office in Dar-es-Salaam. He is since April 2nd, 2009, chairman and Josephat Torner (on the right), vice-chairman. The NGO's goal is to help Albino in Tanzania and them provide them with sun cream, shirts, hats,... and help albino children go to school.



Photo 16 -

After school, Lulu Hassani, 11, helps her friend Happy Thobias, 14, to go back to the dormitory. The Dar-es-Salaam Salvation Army has a school for disabled children. They accepted few months ago 2 albinos girls thanks to the NGO, "Under the Same Sun", founded by rich Canadian albino Peter Ash.



Photo 17 -

Mitindo Primary School, located 40 km from Mwanza, welcomes 96 albino and 46 blind children for a total of 1200 kids. As it is a specific place in Tanzania, albino children come from all over the country. Since albinos all have vision problems, they sit in the front row. It is a government school but is mainly sponsored by International NGO (Caritas, Rotary, Lion's Club,...). It is still not enough: most of the classrooms are empty... with no table, no bench, just concrete floor. Recently the albino dormitory has been furnished by NGOs with mosquito nets and mattresses.



Photo 18 -

In Dar-es-Salaam, near the Ocean Road Cancer Institute, only place in Tanzania to get cancer treatment. The "Albino United" soccer team trains 6 days a week. The team manager, Oscar Haule, and his brother John, official coach, are both black. Every weekend they play games and the last one against the Aga Khan's team was a huge success: they won 7-0.



Photo 19 -

Agnellar, 29, looks after her son Camillius, 3, who plays in the court yard. With her albino husband, Japhet Felix, Camillius is their first child. They live in Kiwalani, a poor suburb of Dar-es-Salaam near the airport. Japhet is a construction worker and Agnellar makes scarves.



Photo 20 -

Tatu Fadhilli, 12, is doing very well in her new class. The Dar-es-Salaam Salvation Army School for disabled children accepted 2 albinos girls (Tatu Fadhilli, 12, and Lulu Hassani, 11) a few months ago thanks to the NGO "Under the Same Sun", founded by rich albino Canadian Peter Ash. Since April 2009 the NGO has an office in Dar-es-Salaam.