



## Julia's Journey

***Julia had a good life in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). She had two children when she was young and trained to be a nurse in order to support her family. Little did she know that her life would change forever and she would become one of thousands of Congolese women forced into sex slavery each year.***

It was during a visit to a market that Julia was kidnapped by soldiers and taken to a house. It was here that she and other women were forced into sexual activities with men without consent. After weeks of being repeatedly raped, Julia and another woman managed to escape and she sought refuge at a friend's house.

Desperate to see her family again, after a month Julia returned home but the soldiers found her. After beating her parents, her father was killed for refusing to have sex with his daughter. They then tried to force Julia to have sex with her mother and when she refused, she too was beaten. Losing most of her teeth and suffering facial injuries, Julia spent time in hospital before going to stay with a friend.

In order to help her escape, Julia's brother, a soldier in the DRC, bought her a plane ticket to the UK, where she could stay with friends. She started receiving support from the Red Cross and it was here that Julia found the strength to share her story.

Julia was referred to Medaille Trust for support under the Victim's Care Contract. Since being referred, Julia has accessed health care and mental health support, as part of her long and difficult journey towards rebuilding her life. Although Julia still carries the physical and mental scars of her exploitation, she hopes that one day she will be granted the right to stay in the UK and will be reunited with her children.