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Layla

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Interview Translation
Layla from Ethiopia
Frankfurt Women's Shelter
6 Oct. 2017

Interviewer: Melissa Bradford
Videographer: Noah Read

Layla [My name is] Layla [from] Ethiopia. [The last time I lived there was] almost ten years ago.

I have a father and three brothers who are still in Addis Ababa [the capital of Ethiopia].

Yes, I left. There is no opportunity to work, or something, you know. And at that time I was very young and, I don't know, I [thought] maybe it would stay like this. I thought I would have a better life.

I think maybe I would have a better life. I was maybe twenty years [old]. Even I would be twenty in December; I left my country in November. [So she was one month shy of twenty when she left.]

[I went to] Syria.

I wanted to work. I go with a contract. My family was poor so I don't get what I want. So I left my country.

I go with [a] contract, [a] three-years contract to work in a house. [I was doing household work] for a family. They was a good [family].

[I learned to speak] Arabic. [Amharic is her mother tongue.]

I left from there to Turkey by boat.

I was in Greece for five years [and learned to speak Greek] .

I was working but then I got pregnant with my baby and I stopped working. [Because it was too hard to do heavy household work with her pregnancy.]

Then I came to Germany. First I was in Giessen. It was OK.

We lived [in a room] with four persons — me and my daughter and two other persons.

We were there for one month and some days.

There was a woman from Somalia and one from Eritrea together.

[With the woman from Somalia] we [I] didn't communicate [well]. Sometimes she beat my baby. When she shouts, she beat her. I keep [her baby?] quiet. She's old woman.

Then in Frankfurt I was living in a hotel — a very small hotel, like this. [She gestures with her hands close together to show how narrow the room was.] We stayed there for almost ten months.

Most of the time I don't stay in the house because my baby she wants to play. There is no place to play. We want to eat. We not have any place even to [cook]. It [was] a difficult time.

After that place they transfer me because I was having allergy. The mattress, it was sooooo dirty! I cannot sleep in that place anymore. They don't want to change it. Then they transfer me to another place.

From another place — I don't know — they took me to a gymnasium — with my pregnancy [she was expecting another baby] and my daughter.

We don't have anything to eat. And when you are pregnant, you know [how hungry you can get], I was hungry all the time. And when I want to eat, I don't have enough money.

They don't give us enough money because I was eating there. And the food they give me — oh, I was suffering.

I was six months pregnant. And we don't have room! Men, women, everybody together. Imagine! I not sleep.

I was afraid. I was afraid something would happen to my daughter. Not for me. No problem. For me, no problem. I have suffering a lot before I reach here. But for her, she has not suffered anything. I was scared. Every time I was crying, crying, crying.

The man, he was afraid that something would happen to me. That's why he would bring me here [to the women's shelter]. Because I was every day crying, every day. She [my daughter] didn't want to eat the food they would give her. She say, No!"

And from Unterriederbach I go to Rodelheim every day to bring her to kindergarten. Because if she stay home, she don't have any food to eat. And I don't have money to buy [it for] her. Two hours I have to go, come back — go, come back. Two times [each day]. [It's a 50 minute ride on public transportation each direction.] They punish me. They punish me.

[Layla switches to talking about her journey to Germany]:

When you travel with a baby especially, it's very difficult. On the road you need Pampers, you clothes you don't have. We suffer many things. When left from Greece, I came through Serbia, through this, this, this [gesturing a long journey with her hands] to Deutchland.

I walked. I don't have passport to travel. I walked [with my daughter on my back].

When I was in Greece, she was almost two years and six months old and I don't have the money to offer her to go to school or something. If you don't work, you don't get money. No government supports you.

So I traveled from there to Serbia, then from Serbia to Macedonia.

Then to Austria. From Austria the Red Cross brought us here.

[Before Austria] I walked for days and days with my baby on my back and she wanted food.

[She switches back to talking about the present. Since arriving in Germany, she has had her second child and is settled in the Women's Shelter. She begins talking about her hopes and dreams.]

The father of my baby is not here. He is living in London.

[In response to Melissa's question asking what Layla wants, — **here's where the interview picks up emotion with her whole body** — she replies:]

First I want to have my family, like before. Almost ten years ago I lived in a family group. I had my father, I had my brothers — everything. Now I want to have my *own* family! My *own* home! With my children and a comfortable life — at least they can have something to play here so we are OK. We are Ok, we are better than yesterday [in the past]. We are OK but we dream to have our family. I want to be with my husband.

I have traveled a lot. I want rest. I want rest. I want to know this is my place! This is where I stay. For almost three years I never get my papers. They reject me, reject me, reject me. Three times. I want to rest. I want to have rest of mind.

Now I'm Ok. I'm here. This is the place I stay. But until now, I don't know if I will stay here. Maybe they will drag me away. I don't know. Maybe tomorrow I don't know which place I will go.

We don't make any plans. Even you can't make anything. You are not sure. Maybe tomorrow they take me away — I don't know — because they don't accept me.

They say last six months they told me in seven days I would have to leave this country. I don't know. Maybe we stay here; maybe we go.

I want rest! Really! I want rest! *I want to have my own*, something that's like — This is MY house! We stay forever here. And nobody will tell me to go.

I don't want a palace. I don't want anything. I don't want money. I just want my children to go to school. I want to have my own. I don't want . . .

If you go to somewhere you will feel ashamed because they are *giving to you*. [No dignity. }

I know how to work. I will work.

