

May 2008 case study: Integrated Child and Family Support

The Kallon family

The Kallon* family live in a village roughly 8km from the town of Kamakwie. Thirty-two year old Sia is head of the family and cares for her five children alone, as her husband died in 2004. Sia is estranged from her family and her husband's family, as they did not approve of their marriage so Sia was left to raise her children with no support.

Poor clothing meant that the family could not attend community events. This alienated them from their neighbours. When Sia developed elephantiasis, her extended family attributed it to witchcraft, which further isolated the family from their community. Sia could not afford medication and her condition became so debilitating that she could not work or care for her children.

Within a year of the death of their father, all of the children had dropped out of school because there was no money to pay the fees. The children often worked for neighbours, just so they could get something to eat but this exposed them to exploitation and abuse.

The chief of the village recommended the family for support to HANCI-SL in February 2007. Social workers visited the family to assess their needs and together, they developed an individual care plan. The family identified that one of their most pressing needs was for clothes, so that they could be part of the community again. Getting the children back into school was also a priority and within a matter of weeks, our social workers had secured their return.

One of the children, 10 year old Bankello, needed medical attention for a serious problem with his nose. We facilitated Bankello being referred to a hospital where he underwent successful corrective surgery. Earlier this year, the youngest child contracted measles but Sia was able to take him to the hospital and he made a swift recovery. Before, the family would not have been able to afford any medical care at all as the cost alone of getting to the hospital would have been prohibitive. Bankello was delighted to have the operation and he commented that "it was very painful but I am looking forward to being handsome again."

Sia was also able to get support for her medical condition and was able to undertake work. With a small business grant from us, she has now set up a stall and is able to sell items like soap, kerosene, sugar, magi, palm oil and other basic cooking condiments.

As well as working with the family, we have also worked with the village chief to help the family integrate back into their community. The community is now more accepting and have a better understanding of the challenges the family face. In situations such as this, we often find that the community wants to become involved in supporting their vulnerable families.

The Kallon family's life is already dramatically different to before they joined the programme and they are already on the path to becoming self-sufficient.

*Names have been changed to protect identities