

July 2008 case study

Mabinty and Mariama's story

Fifteen year old Mabinty and ten year old Mariama live with their grandmother in the village of Kaba Ferry, just across the river from the rural town of Tambakha. Both of the girls had to drop out of school in 2006 because their grandmother could not afford the fees, uniform and books needed for them to continue their education. Their grandmother has a small business cooking food at the river crossing point but this only provided a small income. The three of them lived together in a one room thatched hut.

Village elders were worried about the family and brought them to HANCI-SL's attention. A social worker immediately visited the family to discuss their situation with them and to see what support they would need. Their social and economic circumstances were assessed.

The social worker looked at the family's relationships with one another and also the wider community and ascertained that the girls had an excellent relationship with their grandmother.

However, it was recognised that the family had become isolated from their neighbours and extended family members who were living close by. A key factor in this isolation was that the family did not have any shoes and only a few items of clothing between them. We provided them with some clothing and a pair of shoes each. This really helped enhance the family's social standing and involvement in community activities.

As both of the girls were out of school one of the first things we did was facilitate their return. Mabinty and Mariama settled back in well and are making good progress. The family's living conditions were also assessed and found to be adequate as their home provided shelter and was of a similar standard to others in the village. However, it was noted that they had very few utensils and would benefit from basic household items such as a hurricane lamp, water carrier, bucket, plates, cups and dishes.

Providing these relatively simple things also helped the grandmother's small cooking business. Before, the business was limited by a lack of resources but the grandmother identified, along with the social worker, that it would be possible to develop it and increase the household's income. A small grant further helped with this.

Mabinty said: "I am extremely grateful for the golden opportunity to revive my educational dreams. Had it not been for this project, I would probably never be talking about schooling any longer. However, this organisation has rescued me from this desperate situation and they have given my family a life. With this continued support, I am confident of achieving my dream of becoming a medical doctor because I would like to reduce unnecessary deaths in my community."

Names have been changed to protect identities.