

Case Study Health

JOSEPHINE'S STORY RWANDA



Summary

In Rwanda six out of every ten people live in poverty, on less than US\$1 a day. 92% of these people live in rural areas. The poorest families often have to sell the few assets they have and incur debts to cover the cost of healthcare fees. The Rwandan health sector is funded mainly by user fees rather than government expenditure.

Family planning and maternity services are minimal. Poor, uneducated people in rural areas have the least access to health services. As a result, one out of every ten children dies before their fifth birthday.

Josephine is a farm labourer. She doesn't have her own land, but instead works on other people's land to make money and feed her children. For women like Josephine, missing one day of work means missing one day of salary, and sometimes one day of food. For that reason many people only travel the long distance to the nearest health centre when the situation is very serious.

Josephine lost her two-year-old child because she couldn't reach the health centre that was a two-hour walk away.

We Save the Children Will you?

Josephine's Story

"I have four living children; two boys and two girls. I lost my first child. He was two years old. He had throat pains and couldn't breathe well [he had a respiratory infection]. By the time I realised how serious his illness was, it was too late. He passed away in my arms. At that time, the nearest health centre was in Kinoni, which is two hours' walk from here.



"If I'd had access to a health centre nearby, I could have rushed to it and maybe my child would have been saved. It is always difficult for a mother to lose a child, particularly when it is your first and, at that time, only child.

"A 40-year-old neighbour of mine died on the way to the hospital in a hammock. She was pregnant and seriously sick. All the way long she bled. She was almost three hours from the hospital. Unfortunately she died before she reached it.

"Having to be carried on a hammock when in pain can make things worse for a pregnant woman. It is bumping and at night, in the darkness, the carriers can trip on stones or even fall down. It is even worse when it rains. The carriers refuse to go because being soaked can make them sick.

"Having a health centre here in Gahunga is like the end of a nightmare. Women and mothers will be the first beneficiaries. We will no longer need to walk long distances for treatment, delivery or vaccines. When our children start being sick we will be able to walk there, get treatment and come back home to carry on with our work.

"I want to reward those who helped to build it and tell them thank you for helping us to stay healthy and save our children."

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What we do in Rwanda

We've built a new health centre in Gahunga that will provide quality health provision to 30,000 people at a reasonable distance from their homes.

We will be training 50 nurses and 50 community health workers in diagnosing and treating early childhood illnesses

By 2012 we will empower 200,000 school-aged children and 160,770 women take greater control over their own health and promote health in the wider community.

More info

Watch an interview with Josephine, and other mothers in the Save the Children film, *Born in Rwanda*.

Read a blog from the film maker, Nic Scarborough on our Save the Children website: www.savethechildren.org.uk/blogs

**Josephine and her 3 month old son Isaac
outside their home**



A nurse prepares a vaccine for a little girl in the new clinic supported by Save the Children

