

### *Dora\**

Mama Margret gave birth in a local hospital in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Although she had high blood pressure during the pregnancy, the delivery went well and the whole family welcomed baby Dora. Five days after her birth, the newborn girl became ill with yellow fever and was rushed to the municipal hospital where she recovered slowly.

“It was only after five months that I understood there was something wrong with my daughter,” explains Mama Margret, who noticed that Dora couldn't sit up properly. Once again, Dora was brought to the hospital where the doctors gave her some medication and a referral to CCBRT for physiotherapy where she was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. This was in 2006 and for one year Mama Margret and her husband regularly brought her daughter to CCBRT's busy physiotherapy department for treatment. Dora was later transferred to CCBRT's community programme where treatment continues at people's homes and at local support units thus avoiding the expense and time spent travelling to and from the hospital.

Understanding Dora's condition was not easy for the family, especially when members of the community suggested that Mama Margret was somehow responsible for it. “I thought that traditional healers were trying to punish me through my daughter. But I learned that it is not my fault and that sometimes these things just happen. Our neighbours were telling me that I had done something wrong to get a daughter like Dora, but now they see her improving and now they keep quiet.”

Mama Kitenge, a CCBRT community rehabilitation worker, has been visiting the family at home every month for the past two years. “I see how this child is improving. Before Dora couldn't do anything except lie down, but now she is already grasping her toys, she can stand with support and drink out of a plastic cup. We are now working on exercises to help her walk,” she explains. Every day Mama Margret works with Dora carrying out the exercises she has been shown by CCBRT and is confident that with time she will be able to walk and play just like other children.



## Adnan\*

Adnan, six, has been on the CCBRT community programme since December 2007 when his parents sought the organisation's help for their mentally challenged son. Since then, CCBRT field workers have been in constant touch with the family providing advice and support on how to care for Adnan, and stressing the importance of continuing to communicate with him. The little boy also has epilepsy and through CCBRT he is now on regular medication which has stemmed his convulsions.

His mother, Irene, says, "Before I joined the programme, Adnan was unable to do anything himself. He couldn't eat or dress himself or wash his hands. He was not a settled, happy child. I did not know what to do with him." The young boy used to wander off around the neighbourhood sometimes becoming lost, a constant worry for his parents. Through support from CCBRT Adnan is now able to carry out simple instructions which he was not able to before such as feeding and washing himself.

In August 2009, CCBRT established a day care centre in Manzese, a very poor area of Dar es Salaam and Adnan was one of the first children to enrol. His mother says, "He really likes coming here. In fact, he often doesn't want to go home. Although he was a bit disruptive to start with, now he has learned how to play well with the other children and he especially loves playing football with the others here."

Irene is happy knowing that he is in a safe place and is learning new skills. Irene has joined a rota of other mothers who do their part to make the centre a community based initiative. Together they clean and cook for the children. "I enjoy being here with the other mothers, it's a happy atmosphere," she says. Every day, the centre provides breakfast and lunch for the children and this additional benefit is an important aspect of their rehabilitation.

"It makes me happy to know he is getting good food each day," Irene comments, "Life is so much better for Adnan now and it is a relief for me to know he has somewhere safe to learn and play."



## Mwanaidi\*

It is 4pm and still the sun is extremely hot in the hills far beyond the outskirts of Dar es Salaam. The earth is as dry as dust making it virtually impossible to grow any crops. The rains are late here this year. This is just one of the challenges facing 58 year old Mwanaidi and the other eleven members of her family living in their two roomed house.

Mwanaidi is blind from glaucoma and has been for the last fifteen years. 80 per cent of adult blindness is avoidable through prevention or access to the right treatment and Mwanaidi's blindness could have been prevented when she sought treatment for her failing sight nearly two decades ago. "I noticed everything becoming darker. I was seeing shadows and there was a discharge from my eyes. But I just kept being referred here and there. And then it was too late for anything to be done," she says.

Widowed a few years ago, she lives with her six daughters and five grandchildren and together the group of women seek out an existence from selling charcoal and baskets. The fathers of Mwanaidi's grandchildren have long since gone. Mwanaidi recollects, "I felt great pain when my own husband died. He was my eyes and helped me in so many ways. But I think I am lucky to have such a big family around me now. "

Ten months ago, CCBRT's community programme team heard about Mwanaidi and the field workers sought her out. Since then, she has received weekly training in mobility and orientation from CCBRT. In that time, she has learned many skills she thought were lost to her along with her vision. She is now able to make a walking cane from branches, has been shown to use it properly, and she can now fetch and carry water from the water hole a few kilometres away.



“I was not happy,” Mwanaidi explains, “I wanted to do things for myself but I was unable to. I used to have to rely on the children to help me around but I didn’t like being a burden and feeling so dependent on them. Now, I can get around by myself which is much better. I can visit my friend alone and I can also make baskets which I sell for 7,000 shillings (around \$5) each. I like being able to pay my way and contribute to the family.”

Mwanaidi has also been taught by CCBRT how to grow cassava and *mchicha* (spinach) to help feed the family.

“It’s too dry right now to plant anything but I can tell by touch which are good seeds and which are not. I can plant them and water the seeds by myself. I can do everything a real farmer can do.”



## Langas\*

“A week ago my life completely changed,” enthuses Esther. The youngest of her seven children was born with quadriplegia cerebral palsy and looking after him and the other children has been extremely hard. “But last week, Langas walked by himself for the first time, we were so excited we couldn’t believe our eyes.”

When he was six months old, Esther noticed that something was wrong. All her other children had been able to sit by that stage and



grasp things but Langas could not do that. A doctor told her then that he had cerebral palsy and that it could not be cured.

Three years later, he was still unable to sit properly, could not hold onto objects or crawl. Esther says she received a mixed reaction from others. “Some people said take him to hospital but others said I should consult a witch doctor. I never did that though. Then I heard about CCBRT on the radio and took him there.”

Since then Langas, now five, has been attending weekly support group sessions run by CCBRT where parents, like Esther, get together and are taught exercises to improve their child’s abilities and are given advice on health and nutrition. The gatherings are a great support to Esther who adds, “We also get a home visit from a CCBRT social worker every month. When it was clear that Langas was becoming stronger, CCBRT gave us a walking frame for him. This made such a difference as it

meant he could get around without having to be carried.”

“I have seen so many changes in the last year. Before, there were so many things he couldn’t do like feed himself, stand and walk. I had to do everything for him and although I was working with him as best as I could, I knew I wasn’t helping him because he never improved. Now he can do many things.”

A CCBRT occupational therapist showed the family how to make parallel bars from bamboo, a readily available material in Dar es Salaam. Twice a day, Langas practices walking with the bars and his mother is convinced this has resulted in a huge improvement in his balance.

“My life is much more open now,” Esther explains, “I’m sure he will be able to go to school later. A group of friends have started a small business making clothes – I would really like to join that group and help with the family income. I never believed it would be possible. I do now.”



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\* ALL NAMES CHANGED FOR PRIVACY REASONS