



HELPING
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a family's hope rises

A mother's love lifts her family from despair to hope.

The Child Rescue Centre and Mercy Hospital help a desperate family with medical care, education, and microfinance training

Isatu's story

Isatu's husband died a few years ago, leaving her alone to raise their three children. She had a baby with another man who became chronically ill and could do little more than dig sand from a swamp to sell roadside for building houses. There was no money to send the children to school, who worked alongside their stepfather in the swamp and were constantly sick.

Isatu scratched out a living farming vegetables on a tiny plot of rented land, her profit all but swallowed up by the rent she paid to the landowner. The family's living space was a 6x6 windowless room, barely big enough for one person, let alone a family of six.

With no money for school, never enough to eat, and no place to call their own, Isatu's family was slowly sinking into despair.

But things were about to change, thanks to the caring intervention of Mercy Hospital and the Child Rescue Centre.

When Isatu's 8-year old son Idrissa became very ill with a chest infection complicated by chronic malnutrition, he was admitted to Mercy Hospital as a destitute, as the family had no money to pay for medical care.

The Mercy staff learned of the family's desperate need and referred them to the Child Rescue Centre (CRC) for assistance. CRC Program Manager David Musa assessed the family's situation and enrolled them in family care. School fees were paid for Idrissa and his sister Zainab, who received uniforms, shoes and school supplies, and the family began receiving a small stipend so they could move into a larger and safer home.

Stories in this issue

2 A mother's love lifts her family

The Child Rescue Centre and Mercy Hospital intervene to help a desperate family survive.

5 Poverty in Sierra Leone infographic

A snapshot of poverty statistics in Sierra Leone

6 Microfinance for mamas

CRC mothers are eager to learn how to provide financial stability for their family.

8 Kids rise to the challenge

Manchester UMC children's choir holds a benefit concert to benefit the Child Rescue Centre.

10 Mercy meets community's needs

Project C.U.R.E. and a generous donor outfit Mercy Hospital Operating Room expansion wing.





Zainab and Idrissa are proud of their new school uniforms.

-Isatu's story, continued -

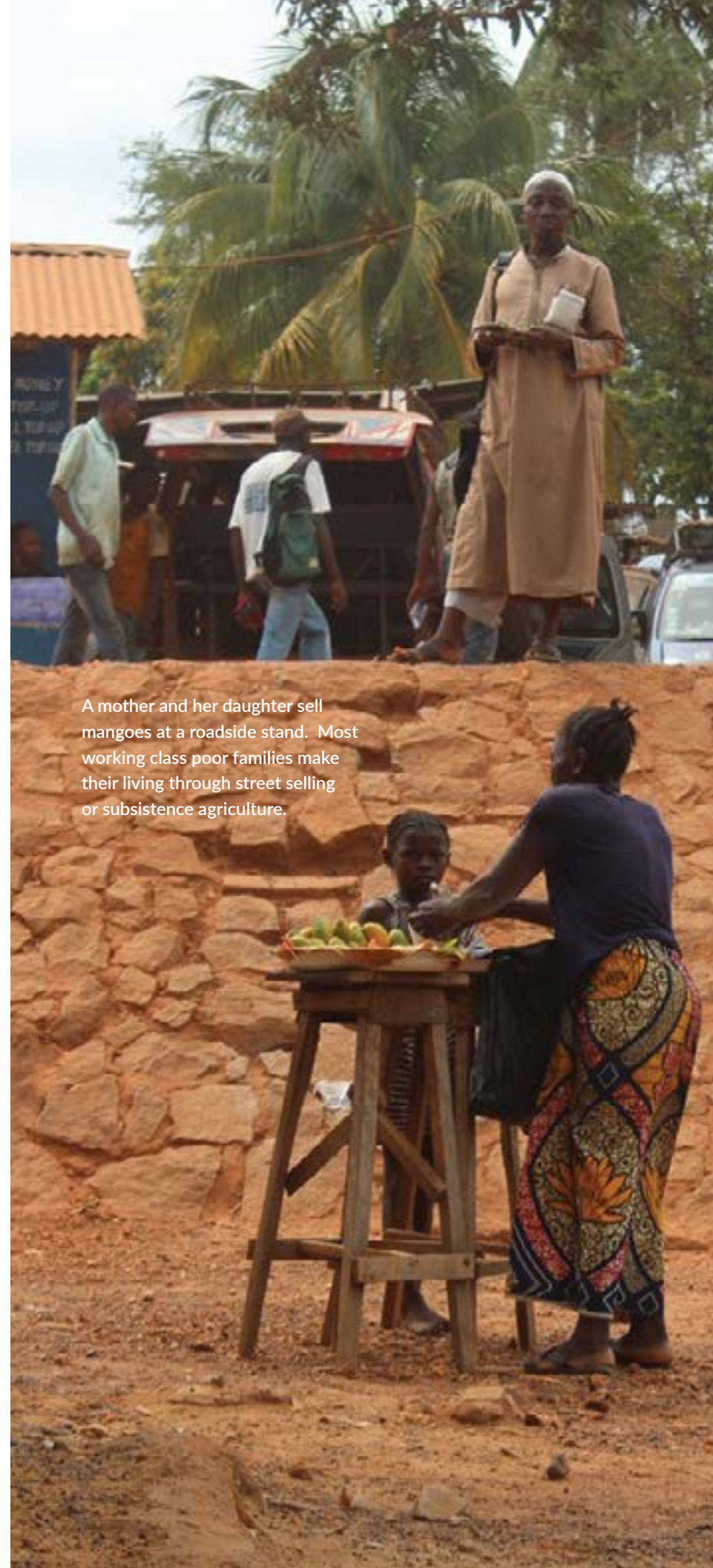
Like Isatu and her family, 77% of the population of Sierra Leone lives in multi-dimensional poverty, as defined by the United Nations Human Development Index. These families generally earn their living through subsistence agriculture and petty trading. Poor parents are often illiterate, and may feel they have no choice but to send their children to work. The CRC's primary goal is to help families become stable and self-sufficient, so they can keep their kids in school.

Once her family's situation was stabilized, Isatu enrolled in the CRC's Microfinance Program. After completing the training, she received a modest loan (approximately \$75) to start a small business selling sandals.

Isatu joined a local *osusu* lending group to help with cash flow. She has been able to pay back 100% of her microfinance loan, and her business is doing well. "My family is now benefiting from the way I manage my little business," Isatu says.

That hopeless time of living in a windowless room with her sick and hungry children is becoming a distant memory. "I also share some of the things I learned here with my children at home, and the children are feeling very happy," Isatu says with pride. "My children are deeply interested in what I am doing."

Through hard work, an indomitable spirit, and the caring assistance of the Child Rescue Centre and Mercy Hospital, Isatu's hopes and dreams for her children are being realized.



A mother and her daughter sell mangoes at a roadside stand. Most working class poor families make their living through street selling or subsistence agriculture.

POVERTY IN SIERRA LEONE

United Nations Human Development Index (UNHDI)

77%

of Sierra Leoneans live in multi-dimensional poverty, as defined by UNHDI.

\$505

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita.

52%

of Sierra Leoneans drop out of school after primary level.

Sierra Leone is ranked the **179th**

poorest nation in the world, out of 188 ranked.

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Microfinance for mamas

Gbessay's daughters Marie and Fudia have been enrolled as Child Rescue Centre students for several years, and this devoted mother realizes how important it is for her girls to stay in school. When Gbessay learned about the microfinance classes offered by the CRC, she was eager to become a student herself!

Gbessay supports her family selling street food and palm oil in the marketplace. She wanted to learn strategies to improve her business, so she could become a better provider and lessen the financial strain on her family.

"My family and I have benefited a lot from the microfinance training sessions organized by the Child Rescue Centre," Gbessay says. "Most times after attending classes, my kids and I will come together, and I teach them what I have learned from the facilitators."

"I used to use money without proper planning and budgeting, which sometimes leads to high spending," Gbessay confesses. "It was a major challenge I faced, but with the experience acquired from the microfinance training, I have learned to develop a simple strategy to handle money, and even how to start a business and be successful."

Gbessay believes she has been successful because she has stuck closely to what she learned in the microfinance classes. "I joined the *osusu*, and bought varieties of local food stuff like palm oil and rice," she explains. "The value I learned from the microfinance classes is how to budget, money management, and proper planning ahead."

Gbessay and her daughters share a house with her sister Musa and niece Mamakor, also enrolled in the Child Rescue Centre. Witnessing Gbessay's success from taking the microfinance class, Musu applied for the program, and is currently taking the classes.

"I feel very happy to be part of this microfinance class," Musu says enthusiastically. "My children feel very happy to see me sitting in class again, and they always help me to read the notes and explain them to me. I believe that I can apply whatever skills I have learned from this class to our home affairs, because I have knowledge about how to manage the home."

"My family and I have benefited a lot from the microfinance training sessions organized by the Child Rescue Centre." Gbessay says. "Most times after attending classes, my kids and I will come together, and I teach them what I have learned from the facilitators."



Gbessay with her daughter Marie and niece Mamakor.

CRC PARENTS LEARN HOW TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR FAMILIES

Isatu, Gbessay and Musu are just a few of the caregivers who are eagerly participating in the Microfinance Program. Since launching last year, the program has already graduated more than 50 heads of households, who learned simple budgeting and business strategies to help them support their families.

The program was started as part of the Child Rescue Centre's Family Strengthening Initiative, to help families become financially stable.

Many of the parents of CRC students dropped out of school at an early age to go to work. They are excited to take advantage of this opportunity to learn about budgets and money management, so they can become better providers for their families.

Kids rise to the challenge

By Lori Borger, Director of Children's Music & Drama Ministry, Manchester UMC

Manchester UMC in Manchester, Missouri has a uniquely talented and enthusiastic children's choir, directed by Lori Borger. Every year, the choir of fourth and fifth graders, called "Music Makers," stages a musical and selects a cause to receive the love offering taken at the event. This year, Lori and her kids chose the Child Rescue Centre as beneficiaries of their musical "Rescue in the Night," a retelling of Daniel in the Lion's Den. The kids raised an incredible \$12,503.67 for the CRC!

The story of Daniel is one of courage and trust in God. We made one of our themes this year about rising to our full potential, like Daniel did, without compromising...and also allowing others to rise to THEIR full potential, by standing up for friends who are being bullied (like Daniel was by the King's advisors.)

We also rise by doing what we can to help ALL children--even those we don't know, halfway around the world--also rise to THEIR full potential. That's what your organization does every day - and we are honored to be able to support your work.

I always set what I believe is a realistic goal for the kids, as I want them to experience that feeling of success....and the excitement of exceeding their goal....so our goal was to raise \$50 for every child in our entire Children's Music program, which is 76 kids, or \$3800.

Photos by Manchester UMC



The show was a huge success! 100% of the kids were WELL and present, nobody threw up on stage or backstage, and nobody fainted on stage... so it was a big WIN in my book! LOL! (Oh yes, ALL of those have happened before!)

Just as I predicted - - excitement and joyful screaming ensued as we announced to the kids that we'd topped \$10,000 and it's still coming in. The JOY OF GIVING, openly expressed with child-like enthusiasm. Favorite part of my whole year!

A member of our church came up to me after the last show, with tears in her eyes, and said she was from Sierra Leone, and wanted to know more about this program. So, God works in mysterious ways sometimes...

Each time we are able to give children the experience of taking a personal role in lifting someone else up in a significant way, I can almost visibly see THEM rise as well...they sit a little taller, they understand that even as a child, they can collectively harness the powerful force of doing GOOD...and how GOOD that feels. I just love seeing the light in their eyes--and tears in some, too--when they realize that they have made the world a better, brighter place for someone.



Mercy meets community's needs

Since its founding in 2007, Mercy Hospital has been providing excellent and compassionate medical care to the community of Bo, Sierra Leone, regardless of whether people have the means to pay for treatment. Soon the hospital will open a brand new operating wing to serve the community better.



Every year, hundreds of women receive prenatal care, postnatal care, and give birth at Mercy Hospital. But until now, the hospital has not had the capacity to perform major surgery, and has had to refer cesarean section surgeries to the government hospital, where patients are required to pay for treatment.

Last year, a very generous grant enabled Mercy to break ground on a major expansion wing to include two operating theaters. The expansion is all but finished, and requires only outfitting to become fully operational.

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Sao Amara, Head Matron Augusta Kpanabum, and Hospital Administrator Jinnah Lahai are excited for the launch of Mercy Hospital's operating theater.

Project C.U.R.E., a non-profit organization that collects donated medical equipment and supplies for use in developing countries, is working with HCW and Mercy to collect the equipment the hospital needs to launch the two newly completed operating theaters.

Rick and Phoebe Peterson identified this incredible resource for Mercy, and the Peterson Foundation graciously donated funds for the shipping container to carry the equipment to Bo. "It's important to make sure that we are going outside the borders of the United States," says Rick Peterson of the reason he and Phoebe support HCW's programs in Bo. "We all gravitate to giving to something in the community that you can see tangible benefit from, but you've got to reach outside the border."

Project C.U.R.E. requires recipient organizations to demonstrate that they have the capacity to make proper use of what they request. They sent an assessor to Sierra Leone in October of 2017 to determine that Mercy could handle an operating room, and determined that the hospital was fully qualified.

The manifest list of supplies has been assembled by Project C.U.R.E. Recipients have 30 days to edit the manifest, remove unneeded items, and ask for different items. Once the manifest is finalized, the container will ship to Sierra Leone. Normally, the process takes five to six months from proposal to shipping, so the shipment should arrive in late 2018.

Dr. Sao Amara and the staff of Mercy Hospital are excited that soon they will be able to do cesarean sections and other surgeries at the hospital, improving the outcome for the children and families they serve.

"I am really looking forward to Mercy being able to do surgeries," Dr. Amara says. "The government facilities do not give as much quality care as hospitals like Mercy can provide. And the other hospitals require patients to pay for their operations, so the destitutes will not be able to get surgery unless Mercy steps in."



A mother prepares dinner while her kids play nearby. Your support of the Child Rescue Centre and Mercy Hospital helps break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy for families like this one. Learn more at www.helpingchildrenworldwide.org



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