

March 2010 case study: Young Mothers

Lois

Lois lives in Makeni with her four year old daughter. As a small girl she was orphaned when both of her parents died in the war. She was taken in by her aunt. At first, things went smoothly and Lois was happy living with her aunt and her aunt's children. Unfortunately, when another of her cousins returned home, family life deteriorated and the girls continually quarrelled. The situation with her cousin and her aunt reached breaking point and she was asked to leave – at the time she was just 15 years old.

Lois moved to Makeni to live with friends but with no income she turned to prostitution in order to survive. Within a few months, she became pregnant. Despite not knowing who the father was and with the disapproval of her friends, Lois decided to have the baby. During this time she managed to obtain food and other necessities by working for neighbours and other friends. After her daughter's birth, life became very difficult, so much so that Lois considered abandoning her daughter. It was at this point that, having heard of her plight, HANCI-SL/HHC staff contacted her and offered support and she was accepted onto the Young Mothers Programme in Makeni.

As a member of the project, Lois was able to have access to education; and a counsellor and social worker were assigned to her. Lois did well and received good exam results. After her graduation she applied for the Sierra Leone Police Force and was accepted. She was posted to the Makeni Police Force, where she now lives independently with her daughter in their rented home.

Grateful for all the help she has received from Project Sierra, Lois acknowledges how important the guidance and support has been to her. In return she is able to help other young mothers with babies by returning to talk with them in the Makeni Centre. She also takes part in various radio programmes set up to raise issues concerning children's rights.

Simultaneously, she is continuing to study. Her biggest dream is to become a Sierra Leone Policewoman in the UN Peacekeeping Mission for Officers. Such is her determination she is very likely to achieve her goal.

Hope and Homes for Children
March 2010