

## **February 2008 case study: Young Mothers**

### **Mariatu**

Mariatu is an 18-year-old mother of one. When she was eleven years old both of her parents were killed during the civil war and she went to live with her uncle. Mariatu was pressurised into marrying young, because her uncle was struggling to support his own family.

After three years of marriage, Mariatu fell pregnant but she was widowed before the child was born. Mariatu's uncle could not care for her so she went to live with an aunt and she enrolled on the Young Mother Support Programme soon after her child was born.

Social workers visited Mariatu and her aunt at their home to assess their needs and develop an individual care plan for the whole family. The family were identified as living in very basic conditions. The house was in good repair but all three of them lived together in a single room and with only one bed, Mariatu and her son slept on the floor.

Social workers reported that Mariatu and her aunt had a strong relationship but Mariatu was conscious that she had no way to contribute to the household economy. Mariatu's aunt worked as a cook, which provided a small but regular income that could sustain the whole family.

From the social workers' assessment, two areas of necessary support were identified. Firstly, counselling was organised for Mariatu, as she was still coming to terms with the death of her husband. Then to help empower Mariatu, we invited her to attend the Kissy Centre. Mariatu has been attending parenting and healthcare classes while her son attends the on site crèche. Mariatu has also started a sewing course, so that she can gain skills that will allow her to contribute to the household economy.