

June 2008 case study

Mardea's Story

Mardea is from Bo. She grew up in a very happy family with her parents and four younger siblings. Sadly, after the death of her father, Mardea's family situation deteriorated. Mardea's mother remarried and unfortunately Mardea's relationship with her stepfather and his children was extremely tense. Over time the situation got worse and her stepfather eventually asked her to leave the family home, despite her mother's attempts to reconcile the situation.

With no one else to turn to, Mardea found herself living and working on the streets as a sex worker. During this time she discovered that she was pregnant. Throughout the early months of her pregnancy Mardea was very sick; she became withdrawn and elder members of the community became very worried about her situation. Several of them visited her mother and stepfather to alert them to Mardea's plight and they agreed that she would be able to return home.

After the birth of her daughter Mardea returned to working on the streets in order to provide for herself and her child. Worried for both Mardea and her baby, senior members of the community reported this situation to the Community Chief who referred Mardea's case to the HANCI-SL team in Bo.

Mardea was registered on the Young Mothers Programme where she chose to train in gara-tie and dyeing. In addition to this training, she also received counselling, healthcare and clothing and food for herself and her baby. Mardea spent 18 months on the programme and when she graduated she received a start-up kit to enable her to begin her own small business enterprise.

Before her graduation, HANCI-SL Social workers facilitated family mediation sessions between Mardea and her parents. Her parents also attended training sessions and workshops which focussed on the relationships between parents and their children. The social worker also made follow up meetings to offer Mardea's parents individual counselling. As a result of this intervention the situation between Mardea and her family greatly improved. Despite this, Mardea felt that it was time to become independent and asked her parents to allow her to rent a property with a young woman who she had met whilst on the Young Mothers Programme.

With the permission of their parents, Mardea and her friend now live in a one-room property with their young children. They are also working together to produce gara and batik pieces which they sell in their local community and to other organisations. They earn enough money to pay for their rent, food, clothing and daycare costs for their children. Both young women now have the support of their parents and their community. HANCI-SL continues to make follow-up visits to Mardea and are delighted by her progress. Below is a statement from Mardea which was taken during a recent monitoring meeting.

"As you can see, we live in this tiny room but we are very happy here. We are doing well in our business and we are capable of taking care of our problems without

depending on anyone. Our community thinks highly of us. Many consider us as role models in our community. The community respects us because we are committed to our business. Even though we do not have husbands now, no man can play the fool with us any longer because we are capable of earning our own livelihoods. In addition, we can send our children to school and at the same time assist our parents in whatever little way we can. Our lives have permanently changed for the better, thanks to HANCI-SL's intervention."

*Name changed to protect identities