

Mary

THE TRANSFORMATION FROM THE OLD WHEELCHAIR TO CRAWLING TO A NEW WHEELCHAIR

BENEFICIARY DETAILS:

Name: Mary Atieno

Age: 17 years

Residential place: Oyugis

Grandmothers name: Peres Akoth

Mothers name: Janet Adhiambo

Residential place: Nairobi

Profession: business lady selling Mandazi around the slums of Nairobi.



Mary welcoming us

INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND:

When we arrived at her home, Mary sat strategically by the entrance of their door, ready to welcome us inside. Instead of shaking her hand with us, she greeted us with a heartily smile and laughter.

Mary, born in 2007, is the eldest of three siblings. Her youngest sister studies in Nairobi with their mother, while the second-born lives with Mary at their grandmother's place, where we met them. Until the age of three, Mary could stand and walk independently. However, at four years old, she faced challenges with body balance, leading to bullying by other kids who laughed at her. Despite her struggles, she remained friendless and isolated.

SCHOOLING CHALLENGES:

Mary's grandmother hoped that Nyaburi School for the Physically Handicapped would be the solution. Unfortunately, the school was full, and they required braces and crutches for Mary's admission something the family couldn't afford. Despite these obstacles, Mary's resilience continues to inspire those around her.

REFERRAL HOSPITAL:

Mary was referred to Nyabondo Hospital by the school. Her weak feet caused frequent falls, yet her family remained unaware of her condition. Following a doctor's examination, it was determined that she needed surgery. Unfortunately, the surgery led to further deterioration of Mary's legs, leaving her unable to crawl as before—a perplexing situation for everyone.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

Mary's mother faced domestic violence. As a vegetable trader, she tirelessly carried Mary on her back. Her husband demanded money for alcohol, regardless of her sales. The situation escalated into insults and physical attacks. Fearing for her life, Mary's mother left her matrimonial home, taking her two physically fit children with her. Mary stayed behind with her paternal grandmother. Later, Mary's father brought her to Oyugis town, where he contacted her grandmother—two strangers meeting for the first time. After Mary's grandmother picked her up, she remained in Oyugis village. Meanwhile, Mary's mother hustling in Nairobi to send money back home. The funds support Mary's sister who is in high school and her grandmother. Through adversity, Mary's resilience shines, and her family's sacrifices reveal unwavering love.

MARY'S SISTER TAKES RESPONSIBILITY

Mary's sister, overwhelmed by a mix of concern, empathy, and frustration, witnessed their sister's ongoing struggles. With their mother's sacrifices and the absence of support from their father, she now shoulders the responsibility for Mary, aided by their grandmother.

Mary received an old wheelchair as a donation from kind-hearted Samaritans several years ago. It served her well, allowing her to move around comfortably for quite some time. However, by 2019, the wheelchair was no longer usable and had to be written off. Remarkably, Mary's family diligently maintained the wheelchair, ensuring it remained evident even when it's not functional. Unlike some other families who might have sold it for scrap metal, they chose to keep it. Without her wheelchair, Mary adapted to her situation. She turned to alternative methods of mobility, like crawling on her belly or being carried by family members like a baby. It's truly remarkable how resourceful humans can be when confronted with challenges.



Old wheelchair



Patricia with the old WC, between the mud-houses

WHY DID MARY RECEIVE A CHILD-SIZED WHEELCHAIR AT FIRST?

Initially, due to a miscommunication, Mary received a child-sized wheelchair. We believed she was a baby, but upon seeing her, it became evident that she needed an adult-sized wheelchair, as shown in the photos. Despite this, we allowed Mary to keep the child's wheelchair temporarily. We assured her that we would return with the appropriate-sized wheelchair, which is why you see her first with the child's wheelchair and later with the adult-sized one. The initial miscommunication occurred because I hadn't personally met Mary. Instead, I relied on information provided by one of our group members who claimed to know her. Unfortunately, I wasn't available to do a thorough background check at that time. Additionally, the reporter assumed that Mary, being a teenager, needed the child-sized wheelchair



Mary and her infectious smile on the kids WC

HOW DID MARY REACT WHEN SHE RECEIVED THE ADULT WHEELCHAIR?

When Mary received the adult wheelchair, her eyes sparkled with joy, and a broad smile lit up her face. Although she seemed eager to express her gratitude, her difficulty in speaking clearly prevented her from uttering any words. We bid her family feeling satisfied.



Mary in the adult wheelchair, a bit exhausted

IN CONCLUSION

The wheelchair will significantly enhance Mary's quality of life by providing her with increased mobility and independence. With the wheelchair, Mary will be able to move around more freely, participate in daily activities, and access places that were previously challenging. It will empower her to engage with her surroundings and maintain a sense of autonomy.



Partnership members



Sister, grandma, friend to Mary



Partnership members

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Reported by PNM (Patricia Nyanchama Makori), May 2024