

forever home



**HELPING
CHILDREN
WORLDWIDE**

three sisters find their forever home

After their parents died, these little girls longed for a family to call their own.

The story of the three sisters is, sadly, a common one in Sierra Leone. It is a story of loss and trauma from an early age, caused by extreme poverty. With 60% of the population of Sierra Leone living below the international poverty line*, poverty is pervasive, along with its side effects of illiteracy, malnutrition and disease. Children suffer the most.

Aminata, Memunatu and Hawa lost their father first, when he became ill in their village of Kpewema near Bo. He was transported to the government hospital where he died.

Soon after, their mother went into labor with her fourth child, who was stillborn. The labor was very difficult, and on the long transport to the hospital, she too died. The inability to access health care when they needed it proved devastating to this family.

The girls lost their parents in 2015, during the height of the Ebola outbreak. Although the parents did not die from Ebola, the family was nevertheless deeply affected by the crisis. Hardly anyone in Sierra Leone escaped the Ebola epidemic unscathed.

** PERSPECTIVE: If 60% of the US population were trying to survive below the global poverty line, that would equal everybody in California, Texas, Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, Virginia, North Carolina, Michigan, New Jersey, Virginia, Washington, Arizona, and Massachusetts living on less than \$1.90 per day, or \$694 per year.*



Memunatu, Auntie Nagissa, Hawa, and Aminata are happy to share a home at last. Child Reintegration Centre collaborating organization Street Child UK estimates there are nearly 50,000 unaccompanied minors in Sierra Leone, with more than 6,500 of those in Bo.

An estimated 21% of health care workers died, severely curtailing the already over-burdened system. The reduction in healthcare services caused setbacks in the treatment and control of other serious diseases, including HIV, tuberculosis, typhoid, and malaria.

With country-wide travel restrictions and wide-spread quarantines in place, an already inadequate food supply was further threatened. The World Bank estimates that two out of three households experienced

increased food insecurity due to Ebola. The ripple effect of the epidemic reached deep into the households of the poor and vulnerable.

After the death of their parents, the three girls were left in the care of their late father's sister, Nagissa. A widow who struggled with poor health, Auntie Nagissa did her best to care for the sisters, but her meager income as a petty trader barely provided enough for herself and her daughter. She worked long hours in the Bo market and the children were mostly left unsupervised. Constantly hungry, they could be

seen begging and scrounging for food around the neighborhood.

As Nagissa's health declined, she needed to seek medical treatment that was only available in Freetown, and she couldn't take the girls with her. Desperate and unsure what to do, Nagissa appealed to the Child Reintegration Centre for help for her nieces. When CRC Education Manager Mabel Mustapha saw the children's condition, she knew they needed to intervene. The girls were not attending school and were obviously malnourished.

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Aminata (left) and her sisters attend UMC Kulanda Town Primary school, which is a short walk from their home and very near the Child Reintegration Centre. Nearly 40% of girls are not enrolled in school at the primary level, according to the United Nations Girls Education Initiative. (See page 7 infographic "Extreme Poverty's Most Vulnerable Victims.")

"When I heard about the death of their parents, especially the mother, I could not hold back my tears," Mabel said quietly. Reintegration Manager David Musa concurred: "I thought to myself that if the CRC does not come in to help, this whole family will be facing problems."

With no other obvious options, the CRC agreed to bring the girls into the residential program until Nagissa could stabilize her situation and provide an adequate home for her nieces. Aminata, Memunatu, and little Hawa moved into the CRC residence in December of 2015, a few months

after the Ebola crisis was declared over.

After enduring so much trauma and loss, the CRC provided the sisters with a safe haven of predictability and normalcy, but the girls never stopped longing for their own family. Hawa especially needed constant hugs and reassurance, the result of losing her parents at such a young age.

Aminata had been in first grade when their parents died, but her younger siblings had never gone to school. The girls were excited to enroll in

the nearby primary school, UMC Kulanda.

Eventually Aunt Nagissa's health stabilized and she returned to Bo. It had always been her heart's goal to care for her late brother's children, and with coaching and support from the CRC staff, she was able to prepare a home for the girls.

Nagissa attended the CRC's family strengthening program, and with the help of a small stipend, she secured a small compound in a safe neighborhood with room for an outdoor kitchen and space for the children to play. Close-knit and welcoming, the neighborhood is close to the

CRC and the girls are still attending UMC Kulanda Primary, which is just around the corner.

"I am very happy to have them back," Auntie Nagissa said happily. "Ever since they came back they have been helping me with domestic work at home. Aminata usually goes for the cooking items at the market where I am selling and brings them home to my eldest daughter. They both cook together,"

"I always help in washing the dishes and sweeping the compound," Memunatu said proudly. Little Hawa helps her aunt care for the chickens.

"I am very happy to have them back. Ever since they came back they have been helping me with domestic work at home. Aminata usually goes for the cooking items at the market where I am selling and brings them home to my eldest daughter. They both cook together." - Auntie Nagissa



Memunatu and Aminata help their aunt cook dinner. Sierra Leonean children begin helping with chores at a young age, a critical part of their development and family engagement.

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“They were all involved in the cooking together with their auntie. You could feel the love when all of them are together.” - David Musa

Recently, a documentary crew from Helping Children Worldwide’s partner organization 1MILLIONHOME visited Sierra Leone to interview and film families like Nagissa’s who have been reunited through the CRC reintegration program. Reintegration Manager David Musa and case manager Assiatu Tarawally accompanied the film crew to Auntie Nagissa’s home to translate and check on the family.

During the film crew’s visit, a neighbor was holding a graduation party for her daughter,

and everyone got in on the action. The three girls helped their neighbor prepare food for the party. Aminata pounded hot peppers, Memunatu drew water from the well for cooking, and Hawa washed dishes.

The whole compound was filled with the celebration of life, and the joy of family and community. “They were all involved in the cooking together with their auntie,” David observed. “You could feel the love when all of them are together.”

Learn how you can help children like Aminata, Memunatu, and Hawa at www.helpingchildrenworldwide.org/sponsor-a-child.

EXTREME POVERTY’S MOST VULNERABLE VICTIMS: GIRLS

Extreme poverty lays the heaviest burden on children, who don’t have the means or knowledge to fend for themselves. Girls are especially impacted - they are less likely to attend school than boys, more likely to drop out early, and may get married at a very young age. Early marriage and childbearing lead to a host of health problems, and the increased likelihood of poor outcomes for both mother and baby.

Sierra Leone had the 13th highest rate of teenage pregnancy globally in 2017, with 113 births per 1,000 adolescents, more than 10 times the rate in Europe.¹ Data from 2015 showed that nearly 40% of girls in Sierra Leone are married before their 18th birthday and 34% of married women aged 15 to 19 have a partner who is 10 years or more older than them.²

Teenage pregnancy is a major contributing factor to Sierra Leone’s high maternal mortality rate, as studies have shown that teenage mothers have a 40%-60% risk of dying in childbirth. Babies born to teenage mothers have a 50% higher risk of being stillborn or dying shortly after birth than babies born to mothers over the age of 20.³

While boys and girls complete primary school at almost identical levels in Sierra Leone, completion rates for girls and boys in junior and senior secondary schools diverge radically; the rates for girls are 41% for junior secondary school and only 17% for senior secondary school, compared to rates of 57% and 35% for boys.¹ The education of girls is so important because girls who are not attending school are more likely to be married early.⁴



Girls are especially impacted by poverty in Sierra Leone

83%

of girls drop out of school before graduating from secondary school.

Sierra Leone has the

13th

highest rate of teenage pregnancy globally.

38%

of young women aged 20-24 have given birth by age 18.

40%

of girls marry before the age of 18.

1 - UNICEF, www.unicef.org/stories/ending-child-marriage-and-teenage-pregnancy-sierra-leone

2 - Sierra Leone Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017

3 - UNFPA, Adolescent Pregnancy: A Review of the Evidence

4 - Plan UK: Before Their Time: Challenges to Implementing the Prohibition Against Child Marriage in Sierra Leone

Reintegration Manager David Musa visits John at his family home. John was separated from his family by the Ebola crisis and reunited with them in 2018 (read John's story in our Summer 2019 magazine.) Photo credit: Leigh Sarti



Learn more about the Child Reintegration Centre:
www.helpingchildrenworldwide.org/family-reintegration.

The road to reintegration: leading orphanages from institutional to family care

THE CHILD REINTEGRATION CENTRE PIONEERED FAMILY CARE IN SIERRA LEONE. NOW THEY WANT TO HELP OTHER ORGANIZATIONS MAKE THE TRANSITION.

Based on the CRC's success reintegrating children out of residential care to live with their forever families, the CRC is launching a Reintegration Department to help other orphanages learn how to make the same transition.

The CRC is the first residential program in Sierra Leone to transition to a family-based model of care for vulnerable children. In 2000, the CRC began rescuing street children in the waning days of the civil war. During that desperate time, there was no way to trace families, and the parents of abandoned children were presumed dead. Out of necessity, the children were placed in residential care for their safety.

In 2003, the CRC began extending assistance to children in extremely poor families through the auspices of the Child Support and Family Care Programs, providing different levels of support depending on the needs of the child and their family. In 2010, the Sierra Leonean government passed a mandate that youth in residential care must be reunified to live in community, with a parent if they could be found, or with other relatives. The CRC's residential program began scaling down, finally reuniting the remaining children with families in 2018. With the residential program closed, the CRC's entire focus shifted to empowering vulnerable families to stay together, and to reintegrating children separated from parental care back into safe and loving families.

Through the CRC's Family Strengthening Program, parents learn about healthy parent-child attachment and coping strategies. Few of the parents of children enrolled in the CRC are literate, and they may have been subjected to trauma or abandonment themselves, so these are new and important concepts for them. Parents have the opportunity to enroll in

microfinance classes to learn small business skills (most parents survive through petty trading or sustenance farming), and upon graduation, receive a small loan to start or improve a business. The elements of the Family Strengthening Program work together to help families move away from the desperate measures imposed by extreme poverty towards longer term solutions and stability.

The CRC's new Reintegration Department will help other organizations in West Africa learn how to strengthen families and provide them with the tools they need to stay together, instead of being torn apart by poverty. Led by long time CRC team member David Musa, the Reintegration Department will assess an organization's readiness for transition, teach the organization's leaders how to develop a transition plan, and coach their staff through the process. As one of the key implementers of the CRC's reintegration process, David is uniquely equipped to lead other orphanages to a family-centric model.

"If we can encourage other organizations to reunite their kids with families, it will be an excellent marker for the CRC. And it will be good for Sierra Leone." - David Musa

The CRC and HCW are collaborating with 1MILLIONHOME (www.1millionhome.com) to hold a multi-national workshop for orphanages in West Africa who are interested in learning how to transition from institutional to family care. The workshop, with the whole-hearted support of Sierra Leone Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs Mabinty Tarawallie, will be held in Freetown in October 2020.

WE PLAN, GOD LAUGHS

Obedience leads to an extraordinary blessing for a missionary as she returns to Sierra Leone.

Tina DeBoeser, Director of Missions & Outreach, Ebenezer United Methodist Church

I had no plans to go to Africa in 2019. I will say that again - I had no plans to go to Africa in 2019. My year was simply too busy. A year of too much going and too much going on. Although I had been part of a team in 2018 and fell in love with the mission and people, I was not going back in 2019.

That was final.

Ever heard of the old Yiddish proverb, "We plan, God laughs"? I should have known my head's very reasonable reasons for staying were no match for the Holy Spirit whispering 'go'!

So I went back to Bo to embrace the people, beauty, dignity, promise, and the mission.

I am no stranger to international missions; I am in fact the Director of Missions & Outreach at a large suburban church. As such, one of my key roles is to recruit, prepare, and send teams around the globe to work with partner organizations like Helping Children Worldwide. I recognize and appreciate what a privileged position I hold, one where I have the freedom to choose to experience these opportunities.

I am also no stranger to the criticisms of short-term mission trips. Many of the concerns raised

are valid. When done poorly, a short-term mission trip can actually cause harm and prevent healthy development.

But when we start a trip well prepared, with a humble heart, and the expectation of developing a mutual relationship, it can be a thing of beauty. This has been my experience with HCW.

Returning to Bo in 2019 was especially exciting for me. Part of the trip was devoted to visiting and developing an agreement between HCW, my church and two (of an eventual five) villages. This new formal relationship is the brainchild of HCW and we are thrilled to be the beta test!

Visiting Samie and Fengehun villages was a surreal experience. We were greeted by the senior residents and chiefs, welcomed with song and given the VIP tour of community resources and liabilities.

Once we sat down to hammer out an agreement, it was fascinating to hear the villagers' hopes for their community's future. I was so encouraged to hear strong women speak about their aspirations for themselves and their children.

One thing I have learned from short-term missions is the truth about mothers. All mamas,

regardless of where on the globe they happen to stand, want the same thing. They want the opportunity to raise their children in a safe environment, free of fear and disease. They want their children to have the opportunity to learn, pursue their purpose, to know that they are valued and loved, and to fall asleep with full bellies.

"Sometimes it takes going to the other side of the world to open your eyes and heart to those on this side of the street."

I believe that much division and fear in the world could be solved with proximity. Taking the time to be in authentic give-and-take relationships with others who do not look, act, buy, speak, think, vote, love, or live like us is the only way to remove the fallacy of 'otherness'. Sometimes it takes going to the other side of the world to open your eyes and heart to those on this side of the street.

Africa imprints on your soul, just as surely as the beautiful, deep, organic smell clings to your clothes and suitcase long after you have returned home.

Although I have no plans to return in 2020, I believe I can hear God laughing right now.



Tina enjoyed meeting a new friend on a visit to Fengehun village. "I was so encouraged to hear strong women speak about their aspirations for themselves and their children," Tina says.

2020 HCW Mission Teams

TENTATIVE TRAVEL DATES	DEADLINE TO APPLY
July 18 - August 1, 2020	Deadline passed, contact HCW
October 17- October 31, 2020	April 30, 2020
December 26, 2020 - January 3, 2021	June 20, 2020

Learn more or apply for a mission team:
www.helpingchildrenworldwide.org/mission-trips



The role of case management for vulnerable families

As a solid adherent to the global movement away from institutional care of vulnerable children towards a family-centric model, the CRC employs a group of trained case managers to support, monitor, educate, and encourage nearly 600 children and families. Here's why their work is so important.

Laura Horvath, Ed. D.,
Director of Program Development and Community Engagement, Helping Children Worldwide

The CRC's team of 10 case managers monitor a caseload of approximately 60 cases each, checking in with the children and their families every month either at home or at school. Case managers develop a relationship with the families they are responsible for, working in collaboration to address issues and concerns as they come up. The goal is to move vulnerable families toward independence by setting benchmarks for progress, encouraging caregivers to participate in parenting and attachment workshops, and providing opportunities for families to interact socially with one another to build community systems of support.

Robust case management is critical for children who have experienced trauma or who have been separated from their parents, to help them move from separation to family permanence. "Case management is a principle, not an event," says Mick Pease of the advocacy organization Strengthening Families for Abandoned Children. "It encompasses a series of processes that cover everything in that child's life whilst they are living away from their family."

A parent knows everything there is to know about a child's life; good, bad, and ugly. A parent knows their child needs, strengths, potential, particular weaknesses, and their unique challenges. Parents carry all of that knowledge in their heads, barely conscious that it's there, but intuitively stepping in to guide and intervene to make things happen for the best interest of the child. That is what case

management is supposed to be able to do for every child living separated from family. And as children are reintegrated back into families, case management has to help transfer all of that to the parent or caregiver.

"A family is a system," explains Beth Ratchford, Licensed Clinical Social Worker. "If you hit one toy on a baby mobile, all of the others swing and bounce as well." Families work the same way - a shock to one aspect of a child's life (father loses his job, mother gets sick, a bully at school is tormenting the child), can set off a chain reaction in all other aspects. When a family is vulnerable because of poverty or another crisis, even minor shocks can become catastrophic.

"Case management is a principle, not an event," says Mick Pease of the advocacy organization Strengthening Families for Abandoned Children.

Case managers don't focus solely on the child whose name is on the top of the case file, because they understand that they are a part of a system. In this way, the case manager guiding a child through reintegration to family permanence becomes a critical part of the family system. In the developing world, there is wide disparity



Parents and children who have been separated by poverty or trauma may need help learning how to live together again. Case managers play a crucial role in reintegrating families.

in the quality of case management systems, according to Pease. "Across the countries we work there are varying degrees; some pretty much non-existent, some not even concerned about it, and others moving slowly forward on it."

Ideally, case management should address the events that led to the child's separation from family, the actual separation (why it happened, how it happened, options considered and challenges faced), entry into alternative placement with all the relevant information and documentation, and finally, the good and bad events that happen while the child is living away from home. Care plans

need to be developed, documented and reviewed regularly. Perhaps most importantly, every effort should be made to ensure that the child is given the opportunity to express his or her own wishes and desires, and that these are taken into account.

Case management doesn't stop when a child is reintegrated back into family, because the case manager must transfer all of this knowledge and care to the caregivers, and ensure that the transition is smooth so that the child and the family can grow and thrive. "It's a tough ask, and it has to be understood well for organizations to understand it, and take it seriously, to ensure that

Child Reintegration Centre Director Olivia Fonnle with Mariama and her father. The CRC rescued Mariama from the street after she ran away from home. After a short stay in the CRC interim home, Mariama was reunited with her family, and is once more attending school.



there are resources there to follow it through," says Pease.

A critical and often over-looked aspect of case management in the developing world is the importance of having an effective system for managing case file data. "The problem is that if information is not recorded correctly and stored safely, there will be gaps in that child's life that no one has answers to," explains Pease. If a child is then reintegrated with family, the caregiver or parent will have no clue either. In places where case management programs are weak or non-existent and little information is recorded or

passed on, this can be a real disservice to the child and to the family. The CRC is currently building an electronic case management database that will accurately record critical information, safeguard confidentiality, and ensure that important information from each child's life is incorporated into their care plan.

Child welfare organizations must recognize that they are fulfilling the role of 'corporate parents,' and incorporate robust case management as an integral function of the work they do.

Learn more about the Child Reintegration Centre's movement towards family care: www.helpingchildrenworldwide.org/crc-resources

MILLION DOLLAR TOURNAMENT

2020 IS THE YEAR THE HCW BENEFIT GOLF TOURNAMENT PASSES THE \$1,000,000 MARK

Every year since 2001, we've held our epic golf tournament to help vulnerable children and families in Sierra Leone. This year, we hope to pass the **\$1,000,000** mark with the biggest and best tournament ever!

NEW LOCATION: This 2020 tournament will be held at the beautiful Westfields Golf Club in Clifton, Virginia, centrally located and close to Routes 28 and 66. Westfields' stunning, Fred Couples-designed course is challenging for experienced golfers but accessible for novices. Everyone is welcome!

As always, there will be a spirited team competition to win one of the coveted hand-carved Sierra Leonean trophies, lively on-course games, great raffle prizes, and a fun reception and dinner.

Whether you're a veteran sponsor or this is your first time participating, the golf tournament promises to be a memorable day of fun and fellowship. Join us for "A Day of Fun for a Lifetime of Hope" and help us pass the \$1,000,000 mark for Sierra Leone!

TOURNAMENT SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES:

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SILVER SPONSORSHIP	\$2,500	Corporate Recognition Award, half page program ad, 4 players in tournament and banquet, Signage on one hole, team photos.
BRONZE SPONSORSHIP	\$1,500	Program acknowledgement, 4 players in tournament and banquet, signage on one hole, team photos.
PATRON SPONSORSHIP	\$500	Program acknowledgement, 1 player in tournament and banquet, team photo.

To register, go to: www.helpingchildrenworldwide.org/2020hcwgolf
For information, email support@helpingchildrenworldwide.org or call 703-793-9521 and we will be happy to assist you.



You can make a difference for vulnerable children
and families in Sierra Leone.

Learn more at: www.helpingchildrenworldwide.org



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