

CASE STUDY 04 November 2019

Maternity Worldwide Case Study: A Modern Day Mary and Joseph

'My labour pains started at midnight and my husband was so scared since it was our first baby. He rushed to tell my mother, who she told my husband, Joseph to put me on a bicycle which was already on standby and start off to the hospital.'

This is the beginning of the story of Mary and Joseph Chimwanza from a remote village in rural Zomba, Malawi. It is a story of how conditions in some areas of the world makes childbirth life-threatening both for mother and child. However, it is also a story of how help and kindness from strangers can save lives and inspire us.

'On our way to hospital, we met some people who were coming from the beer hole. We become scared and because of my condition, we decided to face them and explained our story - that we were rushing to the hospital for delivery. The men then decided that to escort us to the health centre. Later in our discussions with the men, we discovered that two of them belonged to the Participatory Learning Action (PLA) group in our village.'

In 2015, Maternity Worldwide introduced a project on improving maternal and newborn health to 80 villages in the Zomba region where Mary and Joseph Chimwanza live. As part of the project, Maternity Worldwide introduced Participatory Learning Action (PLA) activities to women's groups in 80 villages in Zomba. At the meetings, participating women and men are educated about how women remain safe during pregnancy, about the danger signs of pregnancy and when should they seek help.

'My condition become worse when it started to rain and it was cold. One of the men who joined us had a raincoat which he gave me and we had to seek shelter in the nearby village until the rain became less heavy. When the rain stopped, we continued our journey to the hospital where we were assisted quickly and it did not take long before I delivered our baby, Earnest. My husband was overwhelmed to learn that the men who helped us were part of the PLA Group and he was encouraged to join the PLA group in our village where he is still a member.'

'As a small family, we are very grateful to Maternity Worldwide for having introduced the PLA to the women's group in our village and most especially that men should be part of it. If it were not for those men being part of the women's group, it would have been very difficult for them to understand what I was going through as a first-time mother and for my husband to realise the need of been part of the women's group in our village.'

As Mary re-tells her story with baby Earnest in her arms, it is testament to the benefits of the Maternity Worldwide project. Mary and Joseph knew the importance of giving birth in a hospital and managed to get to the health centre safely, where they were met by a team of skilled medical personnel ready for delivery.

NOTES

Maternity Worldwide is a charity saving lives in childbirth in low-income countries by training midwives and skilled birth attendants, improving access to health centres and hospitals, providing communities with maternal and newborn health information and empowering women to become financially independent and decision makers about their own sexual and reproductive health. We have a vision of a world where every woman, wherever she lives, can give birth safely and without fear.

Our mission is to work with communities and our partners to:

- identify and develop appropriate and effective ways to reduce maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity
- facilitate communities to access high-quality, skilled maternity care
- support the provision of high-quality skilled care

Maternity Worldwide is a registered charity no. 1111504 and our registered address is Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton BN1 3XG. For further details or if you have any questions, please email info@maternityworldwide.org (this box is monitored regularly throughout the day) or visit our website: www.maternityworldwide.org.