



IZU Elisa's supports a child-headed household in Kayonza district

Enock (19 years old), Dennis (17 years old), John (10 years old) and Eloi (5 years old) live in a beautiful, nicely furnished four-bedroom home in Kayonza district. They all have bright futures ahead of them and are either in school or in vocational training. But their future may not have looked that bright, if it were not for the help of their local IZUs, Elisa and Innocent.

The brothers grew up in a family marked by conflict. Elisa and Innocent, the local IZUs, had approached the family to support them. Preventing and responding to violence within households is a critical responsibility within the IZU mandate, and Elisa and Innocent recognized that family conflict was a strong risk factor contributing to family violence. Elisa first tried to provide psychological first aid (counselling) but the situation did not seem to improve. The boys' father eventually left the family in January 2017. One year later, the mother was diagnosed with cervical cancer and passed away in early 2019. The boys were now on their own:



When their mother died, the boys became our responsibility

IZU Elisa

Elisa and Innocent increased the frequency of their visits to the boys to check if they had food, and to comfort and encourage them. Through these monitoring visits, Innocent soon noticed that Eloi was having difficulty walking; he had developed a severe cyst on his genitalia, which was very swollen. Elisa and Innocent immediately started advocating to the sector office for the boys to obtain health insurance. They also reported the boys as a child-headed household in need of support to the district Child Protection Officer and Welfare Officer. The Child Protection and Welfare Officer in turn requested a nearby NGO to visit the boys to assess their living conditions. Soon after the assessment, the four siblings were enrolled into a NGO-led programme aiming to keep vulnerable children together in their families. The NGO also covered medical treatment for Eloi's condition. The four brothers have since been enrolled in the mutuelle de Sante health insurance scheme. By the beginning of 2021, Elisa had also managed to advocate for them to receive a monthly allowance for food, new clothes and a furnished four-bedroom house from the NGO. The boys recall that receiving their new clothes and finally sleeping on mattresses was one of the proudest moments of their lives:



When Elisa introduced us to [the NGO], that's when we felt like there was light at the end of the tunnel. They started providing us with food as it was one of the main challenges we faced. We now have clothes, medical insurance, and we have a new house now, which in fact could be the best house in the whole of this area

Enock

After several years away from school, first due to financial constraints and then to the COVID-19 pandemic, Eloi, John and Dennis were also able to re-enroll into school at the beginning of 2021, thanks to Elisa and Innocent's support. Dennis took his national primary leaving exam in July 2021 and joined secondary school in October. He wants to become a doctor.

Elisa and Innocent are also supporting Enock to join a Technical and Vocational Education and Training school. Enock, who aspires to become an electrical engineer, will receive a toolkit of technical equipment and seed capital from the NGO after completing one year.

Elisa, Innocent, and the Child Protection and Welfare Officer continue to mobilise resources for an income generating activity for the boys, with the aim of providing them with goats, a bicycle and potentially a small plot of land for cultivation (equivalent to RWF250,000).

TAKE-AWAYS

- The IZU provided a timely and holistic response to make sure that the child-headed household was supported, and to prevent siblings from being separated after the death of their mother
- In this case study, key components of the IZU's support included psychosocial support, referrals to essential services, advocacy, and regular follow-up including with the child-headed household
- The IZU effectively coordinated and collaborated with local child protection actors based on each actor's competencies, mandate and responsibilities, to meet the children's multi-faceted needs