



Stories from the Field #1

Amanda's Story

My name is Amanda and I am nine years old. I often go to school without eating breakfast. I live in Brisbane with my Mum and two younger brothers. Mum has had trouble finding a job. She tries hard to get one, but isn't well and so no-one wants to give her a go. Because of this, we have very little money for food.

Mum sometimes picks up food from the local food bank near us, but she feels ashamed that she has to rely on "hand-outs". Some mornings, I wake up to find no food in the cupboard. On days when I

miss breakfast, I hurry past the bakery on my way to school and I try to ignore the cramps in my tummy. The cramps make it hard for me to concentrate at school, and I often feel very tired. Twice last week, the teacher caught me falling asleep in class. Sometimes I don't have much energy to run around with my friends at recess.

Some of the churches in my city have helped start breakfast programs in schools. The one at my school starts next week. My Mum is one of the volunteers organising the program in my school. She is proud she can help make sure everyone at school gets a good breakfast. My teacher says start-

ing the day with food in my tummy will give me more energy and take away my tummy cramps and headaches.

I think everything feels much better if you've had breakfast.



Mutufeji's Story

My name is Mutufeji, and I am eleven years old. I live in Ikotos County in the Republic of South Sudan.

We fled into Kenya during the war, but we returned home a couple of years ago because it is safe now. It is hard to come home. We had to start all over again—build a house and plant our crops. I miss living in the refugee camp because I don't get to see my friends anymore. Mum says that I will make more friends.

My Mum misses the help from people in the camp. They gave us enough food to live—grains, oil, salt. We got rations every two weeks. We had a house and I got to go to school. Now life is very hard here, but Mum and Dad want to be free and work. They say it is

important to work hard. I have to work hard every day.

My family grows sorghum on the flat land here, and in the mountain we grow maize. It is two hours to the mountain. We also cultivate cabbage and beans. My Mum does most of the work. In Sudan, that is just the way it is.

My brother just died a couple of months ago. We don't know why. Robert was only one year old.

Maybe he was hungry. Sometimes when the weather changes, we don't have enough food to eat. Sometimes for months.

We don't have any money for food, so my Mum and I sometimes cut wood and burn charcoal, and sell this for food. Sometimes we even sell cabbages and beans if there is any left over. We must carry the cabbage and charcoal to Ikotos. It takes three and a half hours to walk there.



Before we had the borehole we had to get water from the spring. The borehole makes a big change because it saves a lot of time walking to get water.

I wish we had more food to eat. Maybe our crops will be good this season and we can have more food. If I was the leader of our village, I would make sure everyone had enough food to eat every day.





Stories from the Field #2

Bimalu's Story

My name is Bimalu, and I am 14 years old. I live in Nepal. Our family were so poor when I was growing up. We very often didn't have anything but a bowl of rice to eat all day. My parents had to work in the field of wealthier neighbours to pay off a debt. No matter how hard they worked, they could never repay the loan.

I was studying in Grade 5 when my parents said they could no longer afford to keep me at school. People came to our village and I was taken away to work. I went to be a labourer in Kathmandu. I was 10 years old. I felt so unhappy being so far away from my family. I remembered them every day. I worked there for three years.

I worked as a kitchen hand and washed clothes and cleaned toilets. Every 6 months I would be paid less than \$10. I sent most of this money back to my

parents to help them pay their loan back. Some days I was given a bowl of rice, other days I just had the scraps left after a meal.

My life is much better now. I was helped out of my bad life, and given a loan to start a little shop. I work hard every day, but my life is so much better than it used to be. I send money to my parents every few months.

I eat vegetables now, as well as rice and some curried dishes. My dream is that other girls don't have to live like I did in Nepal.



Emile's Story

Emile is my name and I live in Burundi. Although I am 10 years old, my Mum says I look more like I am eight.

Many years ago, before I was born, my community used to hunt animals and gather food from the forest. Now, after the war, there are no forests left, so we have been forced to learn how to farm for our food, or make pots to sell at the market to buy food.

Our family has a little plot to grow some crops. Because the plots are small and the area is dry for many months, most of the little farms only provide enough food for three or four months. For the rest of the year, my family has to look for work in towns so that we can buy

food. During the "hungry months" when there is little food, I often go to bed hungry. Most of my meals are the same - cassava or maize. Without enough fruits or vegetables, I know I do not get all the nutrients that my growing body needs, even when I am able to fill my belly. Because I do not always get a well-balanced meal, I have not grown as much as other children who are able to eat better. I also tend to get sick more easily than children who have been better fed.

A Community Health Worker came to our village recently. She told me that there was not enough iron in my

blood. This was making me weak and tired. The Health Worker also checked my eyes and told me that I was not getting enough vitamin A. Not having enough vitamin A has affected my growth and made it harder for me to fight off diseases. The Health Worker gave some vitamin pills to me and to other children in my village. She tells us about the kinds of food that contain iron and vitamin A. It will still be hard for me to always get balanced meals, but I hope that my new knowledge will help me to improve my diet.

I must work hard to improve my diet, because we can't afford to buy any more of the vitamin pills.





Stories from the Field #3

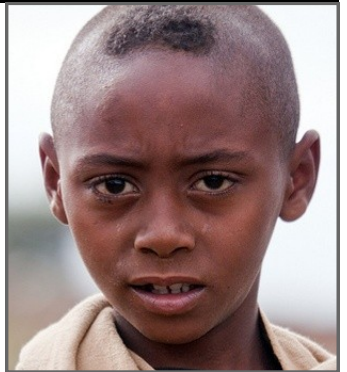
Omar's Story

My name is Omar and I am seven. I come from the Somali Region of Ethiopia. My family keeps camels, cattle and sheep. We travel from place to place so our animals can eat and we can trade with other people. For the last three years, the rains have not come. Now, the ground is dry and nothing will grow. People must walk long distances - sometimes over 40 km - just to find water!

When the drought began, my family began to eat less food, to make sure that we didn't run out. As things got worse, we began selling our personal things. We couldn't feed our animals and they got thin, so we tried to sell them too. Lots of people did this. Because so many people were trying to sell their animals, and the animals were thin, we couldn't get much money for them at the market. Soon, I began to see dead cattle lying by the roadside... and still the rain did not come.

With less and less food, I became weaker and weaker. I'm too tired to play. Most of the time, all I do

is lie still on the ground. I have diarrhoea. I am dehydrated and have lost weight. I can see my bones jutting out beneath my skin. My three-year-old sister, Dol, is very sick. She has a fever and sounds funny when she breathes. Without food, she cannot fight the infection. Her black hair has turned reddish brown. It feels like straw and some of it has fallen out. My father and elder brother have taken the camels to find water and grazing.



My mother is taking me and my little sister to our cousin's village where there is food and a doctor. Once we are well, we will travel with relatives to find my father and brother and the camels they have saved to support our family. We hope to get to the Dadaab refugee Camp in Kenya, though we have heard that there is much fighting on the border, and we may not get through. We need to find a supply of food and water though. We can't survive like this for much longer.

Loue's Story

My name is Loue, and I live in Cambodia. I am eight years old, but my mother thinks I look older.

Before I was born, there was a terrible war in Cambodia, and it changed our country forever. My parents say they were different before the war—happier and healthier. They had many family and friends. They say that although it is 35 years after the war finished, they are still rebuilding their lives. My Dad only has one leg because he stepped on a land mine when he was clearing the land the government gave his family. I would have liked to see Cambodia before the war. I hear many stories, but it is hard to imagine such

a different country to the one I go to school now. My parents say know today. It is so poor in the these are all good things. rural areas where we live. Some people in the village have been into the cities, and they say there are big, beautiful buildings there. I might see them one day, but I have never been out of our village.

When I was little, we were very poor, but aid agencies have been working in our village for a while now, and our life seems to be improving. They taught us how to grow better crops and have put in water pumps so we have clean water. There is a little village bank, and rice banks to save rice if the rains don't come. We can

What I notice most is that we have better food now than we used to have. We only used to eat a bowl of rice in the morning, but now we have two meals a day. We have rice in the morning, and at night we have rice with some vegetables. On a really special occasion, we even have some chicken! I would like one day for our family to have some more food. It would be good for us to have three meals a day like other people do. But we would use up the rice too quickly, so that is not possible for now.





Stories from the Field #4

Rosa's Story

Rosa is eight years old and lives in a very poor slum area outside Mozambique's capital city, Maputo. Many people are living with HIV or AIDS. Unemployment is high, and there are serious health issues from lack of hygiene and nutritious food.

Rosa's Dad contracted HIV, and passed it on to her Mum. Rosa was born HIV positive—she was born with a disease that there is no cure for, through no fault of her own. When she was very young, Rosa's Mum died, and her father went away to South Africa to work in the mines (like many men in Mozambique do). She has only seen her father a couple of times since he went away.

Rosa is looked after by some older ladies who live in the slum. Because of this, life is very difficult for Rosa. There is very little food, and they have to rely on other people to help. Rosa goes to school hungry every day, and relies on handouts from organisations who help at the school for lunch.



Rosa hopes that she can go to school long enough to learn how to get a good job. She would love to be a teacher one day, but know that she will probably not be able to keep going to school for that long.

The medical staff who occasionally assess Rosa are worried that she will get sick because she does not have enough nutrients in her diet to fight the HIV infection.

Oredi's Story

My name is Oredi and I am 12 years old. In the last week, I have eaten only a small bowl of rice and some bad tasting leaves. I live in South Sudan, but my family and I had to run away from our home because people came to our village and started shooting people. My dad and my eldest brother were killed.

I have been hiding in the forest with my mom, my older sister and my two younger brothers. I have had stomach pains and headaches, but mostly I just feel weak and faint. There is a proverb that says, "A hungry man is an angry man." I have noticed that when people in my village are hungry, they some-

times fight with each other and get mad easily. Because they are hungry but have so little food, people have started to eat things that they would not normally eat, like roots, leaves and even bark.

The strange food has made some people sick. I now get sick very easily, too. I have had diarrhea many times, which also keeps me weak and unable to do much. I have lost weight. My mom says I am so light that I am very easy to pick up.

Our family is walking to a special camp called Kakuma. It is in Kenya, and was set up for people who have had to leave their homes. We have heard about Kakuma from different people who have travelled past. They all say it is not a great place to live, but at

the camp, groups provide food like wheat, beans and oil. Also, there is a program for children like me who need special attention and care. Children with malnutrition are given special food and medical treatment to make sure that they become healthy and regain their weight. I really want to be heavy enough so my mother can't pick me up!

They have shelter and water too. I can't wait to get to Kakuma.





Questions: Stories from the Field

Amanda

1. What do you think is different about children living in poverty in Australia compared to children living in poverty in developing countries?
2. Why is it important that we remember to care for people who live in Australia as well as those overseas?
3. List five reasons why Amanda's Mum might be having difficulty finding and keeping a job.
4. Why does Amanda's Mum feel ashamed of relying on 'handouts'?
5. What do you see as a sustainable way for Amanda and her Mum to break the poverty cycle?
6. Why is Amanda's story different from all the rest?

Mutufeji

1. What are some impacts a war has on a country like South Sudan?
2. List the blessings of living in a refugee camp.
3. What are some of the biggest problems for returning refugees like Mutufeji and his family?
4. Why did Mutufeji's parents want to return home? What has been the most devastating impact for Mutufeji's family stemming from lack of food?
5. What do Mutufeji and his mother do to try to get money to buy food?
6. What do you think will be the long-term impact on Mutufeji's health because he doesn't get enough food to eat?

Bimalu

1. Bimalu's parents were bonded labourers in Nepal. What did they have to do to repay their debt?
2. How old was Bimalu when she was sent to Kathmandu as a labourer?
3. What do you think of the amount of money she was paid every six months? Would you work for that amount of money? Did she have a choice?
4. How did Bimalu make a fresh start in her life?
5. How is her life better now than it was before?
6. How is Bimalu hoping to help her parents to free them from the loan?

Emile

1. What are some reasons that Emile looks younger than he actually is?
2. What is the impact of deforestation on Emile's community?
3. What are 'hungry months' in Emile's community?
4. What are the outcomes for Emile not having enough iron in his blood?
5. What is affected by Emile not having enough vitamin A?

6. Giving vitamin pills is a short-term solution to the problems Emile has. What do you think he and his family need to do so they can improve his health?

Omar

1. Describe how Omar and his family lived before the drought began.
2. How has the drought changed the way his family lives?
3. Why doesn't Omar play any more?
4. Where do Omar and his family hope to end up? Why do they think this will save them?
5. Do people choose to be a refugee, or are they caught up in a situation beyond their control?
6. If you were Omar, what would you hope for your future?

Loue

1. How do you think the war in Cambodia changed Loue's parents?
2. Many people are surprised that a country takes so long to rebuild after war. Why do you think it takes so long?
3. What do you think Loue would like if she went to a city? What do you think would puzzle her about how people live in cities? What would she think if she visited your city?
4. What are the good things that have come to Loue's village since aid agencies have been working there?
5. What does Loue think is the best thing of all the improvements? How has this changed her life?

Rosa

1. What are the challenges for people in the slum where Rosa lives?
2. What health issue will Rosa live with for the rest of her life? How has this disease affected her family? How does it affect Mozambique?
3. Why is Rosa's life so difficult? What could happen to change Rosa's life for the better?
4. Why will a good diet help Rosa to lead a more productive and happy life?

Oredi

1. Why did Oredi have to leave his village?
2. What has Oredi's life been like since his family fled?
3. What does the proverb 'A hungry man is an angry man' mean? What does Oredi see that makes him believe in the proverb?
4. Why does Oredi look forward to going to the refugee camp?
5. Do you think it will be as good as he hopes? Why or why not?

Please note: All *Stories from the Field* are based on actual people and events in each of the countries listed. In some cases, extra information has been added than what was recorded in interviews, but it is accurate for the people in the region. For privacy reasons, the photos have been changed to another child about the same age.



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