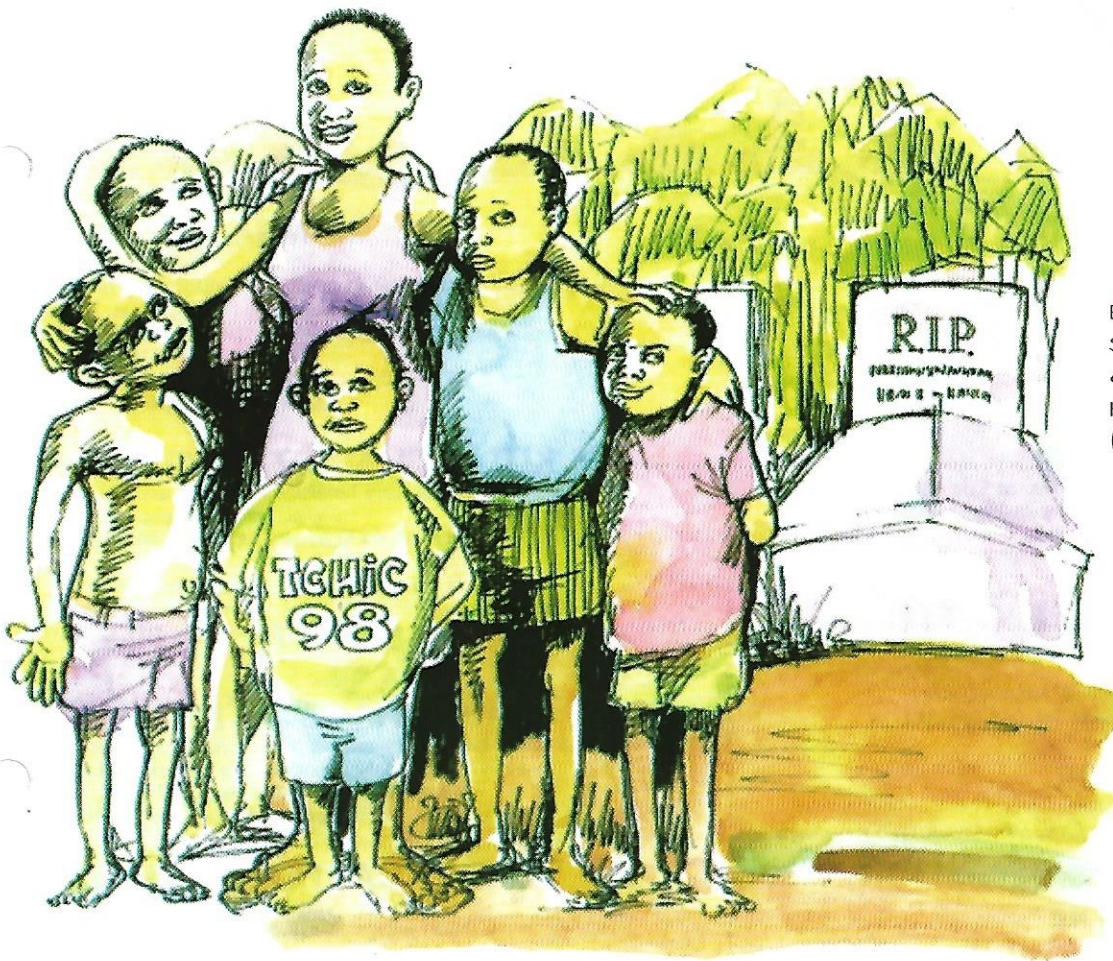


HONGERA NEEMA!

CONGRATULATIONS NEEMA!



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Neema is a 17-year-old secondary school student who lives by the words of Emerson, an American poet who said "You find true joy and happiness in life when you give and give and go on giving and never count the cost." Neema lost both her parents to AIDS; her father died first, and when she was just about to finish primary school at the age of 12, her mother passed away.

Neema ana umri wa miaka 17, mwanafunzi katika shule ya sekondari. Yeye anaishi kwa mujibu wa maneno ya Emerson, Mwamerika Mshairi aliyesema kuwa "Utapata furaha ya kweli na nderemo katika maisha iwapo utatoa na kutoa na kuendelea kutoa na kamwe bila kuhesabu gharama". Neema amepoteza wazazi wake wote wawili kutokana na ugonjwa wa Ukimwi; Baba yake alifariki kwanza, na alipokuwa anakaribia kumaliza shule ya msingi akiwa na umri wa miaka 12, mama yake pia akafariki.

She nursed her with love and care to the end, and when it was all over, and she had finished crying she began to understand the enormity of her situation.

Neema is the eldest in a family of six children. She has five younger brothers; the youngest is just nine years old. She quickly learned that families afflicted by AIDS don't always get the help they need from friends and neighbors. She doesn't feel bitter about this because she believes that some people were just too scared to visit them and others were already suffering from their own problems.

So Neema contained her grief, gathered her siblings about her and set out to put things right! She firmly believes, as her parents did, that education is the key that unlocks the door of the cell of poverty. With this thought foremost in her mind she was desperate to be given the chance to stay at school. Coincidentally, at the time of Neema's troubles a study was being carried out in her area of town on families affected by AIDS! WAMATA, a non-profit organisation that helps people cope with the trauma, burden and pain inflicted on them and their families by HIV/AIDS had sent a group of social workers in to do an impact assessment.

A friend told the social workers about Neema and her family and they immediately went to see her. WAMATA studied her case and agreed to finance her secondary school education. After two years she has proved that she could cope with school and care for her siblings - and now they are all going to school!

They all wear their uniforms with pride and keep them spotlessly clean. Only six out of every hundred girls get to secondary school in Tanzania, Neema is one of them. She interacts freely with her teachers and friends, many of whom have no idea of her situation at home. Even though Neema rarely finds time to study at home, her teachers have told WAMATA that she is a very bright student with a good chance of joining the tiny minority of girls who make it to university.

Neema wakes up at 5.30 in the morning, she quickly cooks maize porridge for six before she gets ready to go out. She then sets tasks for her brothers to do when they get home from school. They respect her and help with all the household chores. Often there is very little food on the table, but whatever there is, is eaten with great relish and shared equally by all.

As night falls over Neema in the one room that is her house, she gives thanks for the love and harmony she shares with her brothers. Her desire to succeed and her determination to study and care for her siblings shine through. She accepts life one day at a time, struggling against tremendous odds and coping with a remarkable courage and wisdom for one so young!

May the Neema, of this story fulfill her dream to enter University and better her lot in life and may others like her find the courage, hope and resources to cope with the scourge of HIV/AIDS as she has so admirably done!

Alimtunza kwa mapenzi na uangalizi mzuri hadi kifo chake, na yote yalipokwisha, na majonzi yalipoisha alianza kuelewa ugumu wa maisha utakaomkabili.

Neema ni mtoto wa kwanza katika kuzaliwa katika familia ya watoto sita. Ana kaka zake wadogo watano; mdogo kuliko wote ana umri wa miaka tisa. Kwa haraka, ameelewa kuwa familia zilizoathirika kwa ugonjwa wa ukimwi hazipati msaada wowote toka kwa marafiki wala majirani. Hali hii haimhuzunishi kwani anaamini kuwa watu wengine wanaogopa kuwatembelea na wengine tayari wana matatizo yao.

Kwakiasi hicho, Neema aliweza kudhibiti huzuni yake, akawakusanya ndugu zake na kuyaweka mambo sawa! Ana imani thabiti kama waliyokuwa nayo wazazi wake kuwa Elimu ni ufunguo unaofungua mlango wa chumba cha umaskini, kwa mawazo haya akilini mwake alikata tamaa ya kuendelea na masomo. Kwa bahati wakati Neema akiwa katika matatizo haya utafiti ulifanywa katika eneo lao kuhusu familia zilizoathiriwa na ugonjwa wa Ukimwi" Shirika la Huduma WAMATA linalosaidia watu kukabiliana na viwewe, mizigo na uchungu walivyo sababishiwa wao na familia zao na ugonjwa wa ukimwi lilituma kikundi cha ustawi wa jamii ili kufanya tathmini na kupata matokeo.

Rafiki yake aliwaeleza watu wa ustawi wa jamii kuhusu suala la Neema na familia yake, na mara moja walikwenda kumuona Neema. WAMATA lililichunguza suala lake na kukubali kumlipia ada ya shule ya sekondari. Baada ya miaka miwili, Neema alithibitisha kuwa aliweza kuendelea kimasomo na wakati huohuo kuwatunza wadogo zake na sasa wote wanakwenda shule!

Wote wanavaa sare zao safi na kuziweka katika hali ya usafi. Ni wasichana sita tu kati ya wasichana mia moja wanaoingia katika shule za sekondari nchini Tanzania. Neema ni mmoja wao. Ameelewana vizuri na waalimu wake na rafiki zake. Wengi hawaelewi maisha ya Neema huko nyumbani kwao. Ingawaje Neema hupata muda mfupi sana wa kujisomea akiwa nyumbani, waalimu wamewaeleza viongozi wa WAMATA kuwa Neema ni msichana mwenye bidii na akili nyingi ambaye ni kati ya wasichana wachache wenye uwezo wa kuendelea na masomo ya juu hadi kufikia chuo kikuu.

Neema huamka saa 11.30 asubuhi. Hupika uji wa mahindi wa watu sita haraka iwezekanavyo kabla hajaondoka. Huwapangia kazi za kufanya wadogo zake mara watokapo shuleni. Wanamheshimu dada yao na kumsaidia kazi zote ndogondogo za nyumbani. Mara kwa mara kunakuwepo na kiasi kidogo sana cha chakula nyumbani lakini kikiwepo huwa kinagawiwa sawa na kuliwa na wote kwa furaha. Wakati wa jioni Neema akiwa katika chumba chake kimoja ambacho ndiyo nyumba yake, hushukuru kwa namna anavyoishi kwa upendo na amani na ndugu zake. Anayakubali maisha kwa siku na wakati, kupambana dhidi ya magumu na kukabiliana kwa ujasiri wa ajabu na hekima kwa kijana mdogo namna hii!

Neema wa hadithi hii na afanikiwe kutimiza ndoto yake ya kujiunga na chuo kikuu na kuwa na maisha mazuri baadaye, ili wengine wengi walio sawa naye waweze kuwa na ujasiri vivyo hivyo, matumaini na kupata misaada ya kukabiliana na jango hili la ukimwi kama alivyofanya kwa mshangao!