

BRINGING FREEDOM TO RURAL GAMBIA



A remote Gambian community is now benefiting from improved access to healthcare, thanks to the work of Riders for Health.

Located in the remote Central River Division, over a day's journey from the capital, Banjul, the rural community of Jahangka is isolated by poor roads and harsh terrain. Villagers had previously used horse carts to take patients to the nearest hospital, some ten miles away.

23-year old Hatou Boye, from Jahangka, has experienced first-hand the anguish such isolation can cause. He had been married for just three months when his wife, 19-year old Rohey, announced that she was pregnant with their first child.



"We were both so happy," said Hatou. "The week before the baby was due, I was making preparations for a feast - the baby's naming ceremony."

Rohey went into labor unexpectedly at 6am. Hatou had arranged to borrow his neighbor's horse cart to take her to the nearest hospital - two and half hours away. But at the crucial time the cart was out of action, being repaired.

Hatou cycled to the next village, then out to the community's farmland, to look for another cart. But by the time he returned an hour later, there was terrible news. The baby was stillborn, and Rohey was dead through loss of blood.



A year on, the memory is still painful for Hatou. "This was devastating for me," he says. "I can not sleep in the house any more, and when I look at her photo, I am filled with sadness."

That's the kind of tragedy that shouldn't happen to anyone. Now, at least, it won't happen again in Jahangka.

The villagers are now the proud owners of an Uhuru community vehicle. The Uhuru (meaning 'freedom' in Swahili) is a multi-purpose vehicle; a revolutionary take on the traditional motorcycle and sidecar. Cost-effective, lightweight, and extremely sturdy, it has been designed to carry a stretcher and a safe-motherhood chair for women in threatening labor. With its trailer attached, the Uhuru can also be used to carry freight.

Funding for the vehicle itself was provided by a Rotary Club in the UK, but the generous support of GlobalGiving donors means that Riders can provide the vital support infrastructure needed to keep the Uhuru on the road, including fuel, training and regular maintenance. Before the handover of the vehicle, the villagers selected two members of the community to be trained by Riders for Health in riding and operating the Uhuru, and now regular maintenance is also provided by Riders technicians Edrisa Gissay and Lamin Jallow.

The Uhuru has made a radical difference to the community. It has enabled them to transport crops (such as rice, beans, cassava, maize and ground nuts) to market more easily, and it has also been used by the local women's group (kafoo) for their income generation initiatives. Most importantly, the villagers can now take the sick to hospital in a fraction of the time.

Baby Ibrahim Jagne (pictured right) is testimony to how the Uhuru can save lives. His mother, Matty, already had seven children, all born at home. But when Ibrahim started to arrive feet first, after an exhausting six hours in labor, Matty needed to get to hospital - fast.

"I was so tired, and in such great pain," said Matty. "Without the Uhuru to take me to hospital, I really think I would have died that day."

Ibrahim is now thriving, and Matty is looking forward to a healthy, happy future for her family.

Thank you

None of this would have been possible without the generous support we have received from GlobalGiving donors. On behalf of Matty, Ibrahim and all the people in Jahangka who are now able to access vital healthcare services, Riders for Health would like to say "thank you".

