



Stories  
from

the  
field

## IZU Emmanuel and Genevieve support a young person living with disabilities in Kamonyi district

At age 27, Ollie lives in a beautiful clean home and is a successful small business owner, despite having a cognitive disability and having left primary school before completion.

Ollie spent her youngest years in a children's home in Gasabo district, before being transferred to a nun's convent in Kicukiro district in her teens. Following national childcare reform efforts which led to the reintegration of children and young adults living in children's institutions back to family- and community-based care, Ollie was placed into a supported independent living arrangement in Kamonyi district in 2015. This is where Emmanuel and Genevieve, IZUs in Kamonyi district, met Ollie in 2019. Emmanuel and Genevieve had both been IZUs for many years, and worked closely with the District Child Protection and Welfare Officer (CPWO) to support vulnerable children within Kamonyi district. The CPWO informed Emmanuel and Genevieve that Ollie needed additional support to live fully independently, reflecting the broader role of IZU in addressing the welfare and wellbeing of individuals in situations of vulnerability. The CPWO tasked Emmanuel and Genevieve with finding a plot of land for Ollie to cultivate, so that she could support herself fully and graduate from National Commission for Children (NCC; now National Child Development Agency) support.



Sustaining Ollie's monthly income had been a challenge for NCC for the longest time and because of her disability, Ollie requires a credible person to help put her money to good use.

Umubyeyi, CPWO

In line with the recommended child-centered partnership approach, Emmanuel and Genevieve asked Ollie what she needed to become more independent. Ollie informed them of the challenges she was facing. She was supported by the NCC to set up a small vegetable trading kiosk but had a hard time keeping count of her stock and her income. Additionally, although she received a district monthly stipend from the NCC, she was never able to make it last to the end of the month. Ollie explained that her long-term goal was to have her own salon. Learning small business skills from the vegetable stall was therefore valuable, but she lacked the skills to braid hair.

Emmanuel and Genevieve quickly identified that although Ollie was committed to living independently, the basic maths skills required to manage her stall and household budget represented a challenge. She would require close mentorship and support to manage her finances. Emmanuel and Genevieve set out to find Ollie a mentor, and were soon able to connect her with a community member who also ran a vegetable stall and could offer Ollie support and advice to run her own. Emmanuel also helped Ollie re-establish her stall as an annex to the fence of his own home, so that Ollie could save money on rent.

As Ollie focused on her stall with the support from her mentor, Emmanuel and Genevieve went back to the CPWO to find out what other services might be available. They informed the CPWO of Ollie's challenges with managing her stipend, and recommended that Ollie receives monthly supplies of groceries rather than a cash stipend, to make sure that she does not run out of food by the end of the month; the CPWO agreed. Next, leveraging their knowledge of the local community, Emmanuel and Genevieve informed the CPWO that there was a market for rainwater, and that if Ollie was given a tank, she could harvest and sell rainwater to her neighbours to supplement her income. The CPWO agreed to advocate within the District Office to acquire a tank for Ollie. Finally, Emmanuel and Genevieve informed the CPWO of Ollie's long-term dream of running her own salon. With the help of the CPWO, Ollie acquired skills in hair braiding following a short vocational training course.

After almost two years of assessing, monitoring, and seeking referrals for Ollie, Emmanuel and Genevieve feel happy as they reflect on the progress that she has made. They will continue to support her until she is able to reach her goals.



Soon, I will have my own hair salon and plait hair at a good price

Ollie

### TAKE-AWAYS

- The IZU are mandated as the frontline workers conducting the initial assessment of a child or adolescent's situation. An important part of this role relies on their ability to identify the strengths and challenges that children and adolescents face.
- During their orientation training, IZU learn how to identify community assets and resources to support vulnerable children and adolescents
- In this case study, the child-centered partnership approach was critical in order to identify and support Ollie's needs and wishes

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