



AFTER

# GBESSEY'S

## *story*

LIKE SO MANY OTHER OF SIERRA LEONE'S STREET CHILDREN, ORPHAN GBESSEY LOOKS FORWARD TO A BRIGHT FUTURE THANKS TO THE WORK OF CHARITY ALL AS ONE

**G**bessey is a beginner in pre-school, but she is doing well in the area of reading and recitation of rhymes. Understandably, given her age, she is not good at writing yet [smiley face], reads a July 2013 school report. 'Typical of a young child,' the report continues, 'Gbessey loves to talk in school

and move from one place to another. It is very difficult to keep Gbessey quiet! However, for her age, she is doing well and I know with time she will improve in every area of her schoolwork.'

Gbessey's child caregiver report goes onto state: 'Gbessey is three years old, and will turn four in October. Appropriate to her age,

she is very frisky and playful. She is friendly and sometimes obedient, but can also be stubborn and disobedient. She has a warm and friendly relationship with the other children her age, although she sometimes gets into squabbles with them – usually over having to share toys.’

Of course, none of the teachers begrudge Gbessey’s playfulness, strong will or even her squabbling, they are just relieved that Gbessey is happy, healthy and full of energy, and living the kind of life any reasonable person would want for a girl Gbessey’s age. But Gbessey’s situation on October 28, 2009, couldn’t be more different. Her mother had died from childbirth complications leaving a very small, frail Gbessey in the care of Sierra Leone charity All As One.

‘Gbessey came into our care at the age of two days. Her mother died that morning and by the afternoon Gbessey was with us. She was very small and needed round-the-clock care,’ says AAO founder Deanna Wallace. ‘Now, as you can see in the photo, Gbessey is very beautiful and has a sunny smile that she freely shares. Some of the other kids say that Gbessey can practically bribe you with her smile!’

Gbessey is just one of the children that is taken in by AAO on a daily basis. The charity provides Sierra Leone’s most vulnerable street children with the basic care and treatment that all children deserve – a stable and loving

home, three meals a day, medical care and schooling. Since 2000, AAO’s targeted interventions have improved the lives of over 35,000 children, women and families in the capital Freetown, and beyond. Gbessey, like so many before her, has benefited from the work of the All As One Medical Clinic, which helps keep Sierra Leonean children and families healthy by providing preventative intervention and medical treatment; the All As One Academy, which provides education for students; and the All As One Children’s Centre, which houses many of the children in the charity’s care.

JA Resorts & Hotels has long been supporting the work of All As One, providing the charity support and supplies where needed. ‘I want to sincerely say “thank you” to the JA Resorts & Hotels team for their support and the generous gifts they have made at the times when we most need it. [They] have helped to keep our doors open,’ says AAO’s Sierra Leone director, Steven Amara.

‘Gbessey is in nursery school and still learning to read and write the alphabet and numbers,’ reads a December 2013 school report. ‘She is doing well in school, but she tends to be too playful. Gbessey is



66

*“Gbessey came into our care at the age of two days. Her mother died that morning and by the afternoon Gbessey was with us”*

confident and sometimes bossy. She likes doing things her own way and she does not like having to follow rules. However, she is a smart girl. Gbessey likes singing, talking, playing with her friends, and reciting rhymes.’

‘It’s difficult to secure her attention during study time,’ states the childcare report. ‘She is very active and does not like to be corrected. She is mischievous and will disobey the staff, if possible. Gbessey is a friendly girl, and loving too, but she just tends to be a bit rambunctious.’

Smart, occasionally bossy, playful and rambunctious – it would seem that four-year-old Gbessey is doing just fine.

BEFORE

To find out more about Gbessey’s progress and that of the hundreds of other Sierra Leone children in the care of All As One, see [allasone.org](http://allasone.org).

To get in touch with the UAE-base AAO office, call 04 311 6707, email [info@aaodubai.org](mailto:info@aaodubai.org) or see [aaodubai.org](http://aaodubai.org).