



# YASSER ARAFAT

**Y**asser Arafat is a happy and confident 13 year old boy with high self-esteem and dreams. But this was not the case with him before he was identified and treated of neglected clubfoot.

According to the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Field Worker of the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) Health Services who identified him, Arafat was closed up, gloomy, shy, had low self-esteem and was not receptive to him and other visitors because he was so traumatized by the appearance of his feet.

When Arafat was delivered the mother discovered he had clubfoot so she felt so devastated and could not celebrate with the many people who came to the health center because of her son's feet. Two weeks later, she took him to the National Rehabilitation Center in the capital city (Yaoundé) where she stayed with him for 5 months but witnessed no change. On her return home they resorted to traditional treatment until Arafat was aged 7 when they resigned to fate after recording no success.

While back in the village, Arafat was identified by the CBR field worker and they were told that the feet could be treated; "I was instead afraid and unhappy because Arafat was already big and was crying that the feet would be painful if they had to be treated". In addition she was still discouraged from the past exhaustive experiences of staying out long with the child for treatment without any positive outcomes. Arafat's paternal grandmother told her not to take the child anywhere and inconvenience him and waste resources for nothing. Nonetheless she finally decided to take the child to the CBC Health Services clinic in Ngounso for treatment. What prompted this decision is that on that faithful day which was to mark the turning point in Arafat's life, they bought shoes for the rest of the 8 children for a Muslim feast except Arafat who felt so excluded and depressed that he refused to join the others to go out feasting and stayed in his closet. After the correction phase, Arafat's treatment continued with surgery at Baptist Hospital Mutengene in the SW Region of Cameroon by the Orthopaedic Surgeon who is the Clinical Supervisor of the CBM funded Cameroon Clubfoot Care Project.

## My treatment has enabled me to enjoy football; my dream game



*Arafat before treatment always appeared gloomy, shy, had low self-esteem and not receptive to strangers*

**T**oday Arafat's mother is very happy as her son's feet have been corrected and he now moves well, puts on shoes, and plays football unlike before when he could not do all these because he had no stability. Arafat's friends and other children in other neighbourhoods used to laugh at him so he used to be very shy when he comes across other children. "I could not wear shoes before and only used a kind of foot wear made from car tyres and adapted to my clubbed feet and I felt bad that I could not play football with my friends". While smiling Arafat says that he is very happy because his feet have been corrected and he is able to wear any shoes of his choice. His friends are also very happy and amazed at his transformation. He is even happy to advice other children of his age with clubfoot to go to the CBC Health Services hospitals for treatment like him. "Today I am very happy because I can play football, my dream game with my friends". Arafat and his mother are very happy with the outcome of the treatment and has brought joy to the entire family and neighbourhood. They are all very thankful and pray God to bless all those who sacrificed to ensure that Arafat is treated. Arafat hopes to become a medical Doctor in future so as to be able to treat other children just like he was treated.



*Arafat after treatment*



*Arafat doing what he loves most; playing the game of football which he could not before*



*Arafat in school with the type of shoes he could not wear before*



*Arafat mother is always amazed seeing her beloved son whom she had concluded was disabled with straight feet; something she never imagined could ever happen*