

Support to Vulnerable Children Helps. It's a FACT

BACKGROUND

Abena Paul, 21 years old and Saskia Burnett, 22, are sisters in a family of seven, with HIV positive parents. They live in Berbice, Guyana with their father and grandmother. The father harvests cane for the major sugar producing company in Guyana, and the grandmother is a pensioner. Life has been challenging for the family, with expenses always exceeding earnings.

INTERVENTION

Abena, Saskia, and their five siblings enrolled in the Family Awareness Consciousness Togetherness (FACT) program. This PEPFAR-funded program, supported by Advancing Partners & Communities since 2013, has provided psychosocial, nutritional, spiritual, and academic support to children who have been orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV.

As a result of consistent academic support through FACT's afterschool program, Abena and Saskia were able to progress to secondary school. When they completed secondary school and passed the Caribbean Examination Council exam, Saskia and Abena enrolled at the University of Guyana and the Guyana School of Agriculture, respectively.



Photo credit: University of Guyana

Guyana School of Agriculture

OUTCOMES

Saskia is currently a second-year student in the public management degree program at the University of Guyana. Abena is a first-year student at the Guyana School of Agriculture and has received a scholarship to further her studies in Russia. What is even more special about these two sisters is that they are first in the family to attend college.

Saskia and Abena are an example and source of inspiration to young girls in their community, and are evidence that given opportunities, even poor girls can break the cycle of poverty if they are supported, determined, and stay focused.



LESSONS LEARNED

APC's FACT program has given Abena, Saskia, and their siblings just that. FACT's supportive and nurturing environment allows vulnerable children to make healthy decisions and achieve their full potential, proving that neither low socio-economic status nor being affected by HIV is an insurmountable barrier to living a fulfilling life.