



Case study 2

Henrique Sabino dos Santos

Henrique Sabino dos Santos is a valued member of the young leaders group in his home town in Brazil. He participates in a Concern Universal's community rights project. He was elected by his peers because of his enthusiasm and interest. In this role he represents young people on a committee of community leaders that negotiated successfully with the local government for improvements to the community health clinic. Henrique and ACNV (Associação Comunitária Nova Vida – New Life Community Association), can rightly feel proud of his contribution to improving health care for the whole community. He is, without doubt, an example of perseverance. His story is one of suffering, but also has a message of hope and demonstrates how he has managed to overcome a number of challenges.

Henrique Sabino dos Santos is 13 years old. He lives with his father and older brother in a shanty-town on the outskirts of the town of Sapé, northeast Brazil. His mother died when he was a baby. He was raised by his father and step-mother, but they separated because of his excessive drinking. His father often comes home drunk and angry and takes it out on Henrique and his brother who, in turn, has twice attacked Henrique with the intent of killing him. Drug trafficking is rife in the area and violence is a problem in his community and his home.

Henrique is a child with special needs. He was born with a facial disfigurement and has speech problems. He receives a disability allowance, which is the only income that the family has.

When he started attending the activities run by Concern Universal's partner, ACNV (Associação Comunitária Nova Vida – New Life Community Association), four years ago, he was extremely shy, with low self-esteem and had difficulty relating to other children; this was not made easier by the fact that they didn't accept him, excluding him from their games and groups.

Today, four years on, the support that he has received has helped him to deal with the difficulties that he faces. “Before I went to ACNV I only used to roam the streets, if my dad hadn’t locked me into the house. I never had any friends; the other kids in school used to mock me and discriminated against me because of my face and the way I talk. But since coming here I feel better, I have a higher self-esteem, I’m able to make friends and I participate in lots of activities like workshops, painting, computers and drums. I also participated in a reading project and I wrote two books. The first was the story of my life; I called it ‘Life: Suffering and the fight for survival’. The second was called ‘The story of ACNV in my life’.