

## Optimistically Fighting Youth Cancer

Language English

Mariam John was optimistic, despite the pain she suffered from cancer in her leg.

Her best friend boosted her optimism: "What cheers me up is when she writes me letters. She believes that I can be cured. I wish more people would think like her."



- Name: Mariam John
- Age: 13
- Country: United Republic of Tanzania
- Diagnosis: Bone Cancer

At age 13, Mariam John already knew what she wanted to be when she grew up – *"a health minister can help others and wants everyone to be healthy; I have good grades, I know I can make it"*.

In February 2005, soon after her knee started to swell to the point that it became difficult to walk, Mariam was diagnosed with bone cancer. She has been receiving chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatment since then – an almost unbearable experience. *“I am willing to have my leg amputated if it can take my pain away,”* she concedes. The day she was photographed, Mariam couldn’t have her radiotherapy treatment owing to a power failure at the Dar es Salaam Cancer Institute. She had crawled painfully out of bed with her grandmother’s help and been sitting crying in a wheelchair for half an hour, with nothing to support her swollen leg, before the news came.

Despite this terrible ordeal and great fatigue, Mariam remembered how to smile. Her best friend and classmate Maria was a fabulous supporter, *“What cheers me up is when she writes me letters. She believes that I can be cured. I wish more people would think like her.”*

One of Mariam’s legs was amputated in December 2005.

Three months later, she lost her battle to cancer, passing away in March 2006.

Stories like Mariam’s are not uncommon.

More than half of chronic disease deaths occur in those under the age of 70, and mostly affect the poor.

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[WHO - Cancer](#) [1]

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**Panel Image Link:** [http://www.who.int/chp/chronic\\_disease\\_report/cancer\\_case\\_studies/Mariam\\_story/en/](http://www.who.int/chp/chronic_disease_report/cancer_case_studies/Mariam_story/en/)

**Panel Image Link Text:** [WHO Face to face with chronic disease: cancer]

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**Source URL:** <http://staging.ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/living-with-ncds/MariamJohn>

### Links

[1] <http://www.who.int/topics/cancer/en/>

[2] <https://google.co.uk>