

SOPHIA'S STORY

Today's inspirational story is about an incredibly resilient young woman called Sophia who was 18 years old when we met her last year.

Sophia had been experiencing headaches for some time. But in July 2021 they became intense. And by the end of the month, she had frightened her family by having daily prolonged convulsions. When visited one of our partner sites – Sengerema Designated District hospital, SDDH - a brain scan revealed everyone's worst fears – she had a large brain tumour. It was decided she should urgently come to Muhimbili Hospital in Dar es Salaam, over 1000k from her home. Her travel was supported by TLM.

On arrival to MNH in late August 2021 our Neurosurgical colleagues assessed her and thankfully deemed her tumour resectable. However, Sophia had a complication that increased the risk of both the surgery and anaesthetic – she was 18 weeks pregnant. This was not something we on the children's cancer ward had dealt with before.

At a multi-disciplinary team meeting it was decided that due to her severe symptoms, the risk to Sophia and her unborn child would be greatest if we delayed her surgery. After carefully counselling and consenting both Sophia and her worried mother, the surgeons took her to theatre; a bed was prepared for her post-operatively in the intensive care unit.

Our skilled neurosurgical colleagues performed this complex surgery smoothly and with remarkable success – removing 90% of the tumour. Sophia made a full recovery and all her symptoms resolved completely. Our friends in Beaumont Hospital neuropathology in Dublin, gave us more good news reporting that her tumour was a meningioma meaning she required only regular follow-up and no toxic chemotherapy or radiation.

In February this year Sophia gave birth to a beautiful healthy baby boy in SDDH Hospital. And last week both came for a regular check-up – Sr Marie Jose sent us the picture below at which I challenge you not to smile!

As you can see thanks to the efforts of teams in 3 different hospitals more than 1000km apart, and to all the TLM donors who so generously support these children, extraordinary things are really happening in Tanzania.

