Within months of arriving in Brisbane from Papua New Guinea, 27-year-old Ruth achieved a level of independence beyond her expectations. Her journey is one of reawakening her prospects in all facets of her life, in partnership with Spinal Injuries Australia and the scholarship program of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
MEDICAL HISTORY 2007-2013

- September 2007 – contracted Malarial Meningitis at age 18 in Goroka, PNG
- February 2008 – loss of LL motor function, transferred to Port Moresby Hospital
- Diagnosed with T2 level paraplegia due to CSF obstruction. Cause remained unknown, treated for both TB and Malaria
- Self-funded MRI in Cairns found metastatic deposits in the brain, cervical and upper thoracic spine to T6
- Subsequent surgery and histology but no change to her condition
- Spent six months in hospital, with ‘rehabilitation’ limited to massage and acupuncture – no physical or independence training
- Discharged with a manual wheelchair (MWC), dependent on her mother, Agnes for all personal care and a second carer for transfers
- Ruth’s father, Hona, built her a wooden standing frame which requires three attendants to use and enabled her to stand for 2-3 minutes at a time
- Family funds physiotherapy, acupuncture, chiropractic and massage with little improvement
- Self-funded in-dwelling catheter and night drainage bags.

EARLY OUTCOMES (5 MONTHS IN AUSTRALIA) 2013-2014

- Assessed as T2 ASIA B
- Ruth learned she would not learn to walk in Australia but would learn to become more independent
- Equipment prescription and supply – cushion, mattress and lightweight folding MWC
- First shower (a long one!) using self-propelling mobile shower commode
- Review of continence equipment recommending less conspicuous leg bag and methods to reduce UTI risk
- Referral for renal ultrasound
- Strengthening and skills training plus standing at My Turn Rehabilitation
- Achieved independent bed to chair transfers
- Achieved car transfers with transfer board
- Can push wheelchair independently for greater distances, negotiate small grades and carpeted floors
- Met Spinal Injuries Australia’s Peer Support team, who validated Ruth’s efforts in personal management, mobility training and future goals.

LIFESTYLE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA 2007-2013

- Relocated with her mother to Port Moresby from family home in Goroka
- Sponge bathed and assisted in rolling and dressing
- Mobility equipment of poor design and fit
- Independent mobility for short distances on hard floors only, and assisted MWC mobility in community
- Transport by private vehicle with three-person assist to transfer
- Inaccessible streetscapes/buildings and inaccessible public and taxi transport
- Limited social engagement, as her mother or carer was always present
- Completed six months of university before her illness but could not continue.

AWARDED SCHOLARSHIP TO STUDY IN AUSTRALIA 2013

- Ruth receives an 18-month scholarship through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s Australia Awards Program, to study a Community Services Diploma at South Bank Institute of Technology (SBIT) in Brisbane
- Scholarship provides funding for accommodation and care support from her mother; equipment for mobility and personal care; Spinal Injuries Australia’s allied health specialists and peer support; and rehabilitation programs to optimise Ruth’s functional abilities
- Access to medical opinions at own expense.
- Ruth views her prospects of coming to Australia as her opportunity to walk again

Acknowledgments: Ruth Javati and her parents, Agnes and Hona Javati; the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s Australia Awards Program; Joanne Webber, Inclusive Development Officer CBM Australia; My Turn Rehabilitation Brisbane; Aidacare; Wicked Wheelchairs; Sporting Wheelies and Disabled Association; and Spinal Injuries Australia’s physiotherapist, occupational therapists, nurse, peer support team and information service coordinator.

“At home) my world was my room, living room and backyard. I had lost all hope in life”
FURTHER OUTCOMES (10 MONTHS IN AUSTRALIA)

- Currently completing study requirements
- Undertaken a Community Services study placement at an advocacy organisation SUFY (Speaking Up For You Inc)
- Ruth and her parents have enjoyed Spinal Injuries Australia’s events and expos
- Building a friendship group who meet for meals and picnics
- Trials of free wheel and power assist to achieve optimal independence
- Funding sought for Smart Drive with folding MWC attachment, her best option for private transport back in PNG
- Mobility and functional abilities have been maintained, but not progressed since regular physiotherapy ceased May 2014
- Continues weekly standing at My Turn Rehabilitation and gym program at Sporting Wheelies Gym.

RETURNING TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA 2015

Ruth has made continual positive adjustments, but is well aware that her return to PNG after 18 months of study will present new challenges.

Ruth will be able to use newfound skills such as vehicle transfers to gain more independence, although many barriers will remain due to the inaccessible streetscape, buildings and limited transport options.

Ruth plans to seek a role advocating for women with disabilities in PNG, after being inspired by her many positive experiences in Brisbane.

"I am very privileged and grateful to be here and enjoying myself and having access to all the things I never knew existed in the past six years."

"In Australia, I have all the access and freedom of movement but back home we have not reached that level yet. My goal is to help other women in my situation. I’d like to set up a women’s network to give women with a disability a purpose in life."

OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

Functional Outcome Measures – 10-Week Program at My Turn Rehabilitation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January 2014 Assessment</th>
<th>May 2014 Completion</th>
<th>Comments at completion of program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Outcome Variable Scale (COVS)</td>
<td>47/91</td>
<td>60/91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinal Cord Independence Measure (SCIM)</td>
<td>42/100</td>
<td>52/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 min push test</td>
<td>Borg 6/10 260m</td>
<td>Borg 4/10 385m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Physiotherapy commenced February 2014
Training program with Exercise Physiologist at Sporting Wheelies Gym from March 2014 to July 2014.

Standing Regime – Papua New Guinea and Brisbane

For six years since her discharge from Port Moresby Hospital, Ruth would undertake:
• Standing from 2 to 3 minutes with the help of three people using a wooden frame constructed by her father
• Weekly standing for one-hour minimum at Cheshire Disability Services, an outpatient facility in Port Moresby, where she needed to queue for service and sometimes would wait an hour.

Australia – using Tilt Table at My Turn Rehabilitation (wkly)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Standing Session</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 February</td>
<td>1st Standing Session</td>
<td>30 mins with range of symptoms — awareness of calf stretch and tingling heat back and buttocks and feet. (Had not stood for 10 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 March</td>
<td>4th Standing Session</td>
<td>75 degrees comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 April</td>
<td>10th Standing Session</td>
<td>75 degrees comfortable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not viable to purchase standing frame for use in Australia
Ongoing weekly standing at My Turn Rehabilitation funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for 18 months duration of study
Will return to PNG with no alternatives but to queue for services.

For more photos, videos and Ruth’s story in her own words, visit www.spinal.com.au/ruths-story
WHO WE ARE

At Spinal Injuries Australia, we are proud of our history. In 1960, our organisation was started by people with paraplegia and quadriplegia who wanted to advocate for their needs, share information and support each other.

Since then, we’ve grown to offer services to support people at every stage in their journey from injury to independence, whether it’s at home, at work or in the community.

Our range of services include peer support, personal support and home care, allied health professionals, employment services, advocacy, support networks, equipment hire and information services.

We also use our specialist expertise and knowledge to support people who have other physical disabilities, injuries and illnesses; including the late effects of Polio and Transverse Myelitis.

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