

Meet Katheeja...

Katheeja (56) has raised her two daughters Rinshabanu (24) and Rizwana (22) by herself since losing her husband 16 years ago during the war.

Before his death, he supported his family by looking after 50 buffaloes that belonged to his mother and selling their milk. The year he died, they also lost the herd in a flood. After her husband's death, Katheeja found it difficult to meet the basic needs of her daughters. Rinshabanu was only 7 at that time and Rizwana was 5.



Katheeja is diabetic and also suffers regular swelling of her feet which makes it difficult for her to walk.

“I provided for my children, selling the vegetables from my home garden,” says Katheeja, “I also receive the Samurdhi subsidy of LKR 6,000 every three months. With these, I managed their basic needs and schooling and sometimes I borrowed money from a neighbour or a relative.”

Her girls studied well and to ease the burden on her mother, Rinshabanu, started Quran recitation classes for boys and girls ages between 7 – 11 years in her village. She earns about LKR 8,000 a month if all parents pay the fees on time. With that, she helps her mom with the electricity bill and other essential expenses at home. She also learnt tailoring in the madrasa and began to stitch their clothes with her neighbour's sewing machine, so that they don't have to buy clothes outside.

June last year, they faced an elephant attack and a part of their house got broken. They have covered it temporarily with roofing sheets. The district secretariat office has agreed to repair the house, but due to the restrictions in the country, it is on hold. Katheeja constantly worries about the safety of her daughters.

Rinshabanu has got married in August and Rizwana has started her university.

“If we can have a sewing machine of our own, Rinshabanu can stitch clothes at home and start her own tailoring station,” says Katheeja, “She is not always comfortable going to the neighbour's to get clothes stitched. She and I can help Rizwana through her university.

“All I want is to see both my daughters do well in life without depending on others for everything,” says Katheeja.

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