



Photo: Ruth Towell/Tearfund

Prayer station

Praying for people who face sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)

Around the world, an estimated 736 million women are living with the scars – emotional, psychological or physical – of physical and/or sexual violence. That’s one in every three women.

They are in every neighbourhood, in every walk of life, and even if the violence has ended, they are more likely to suffer depression, anxiety disorders, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections or HIV.

And while women and girls are disproportionately the targets of this abuse, men and boys are also affected.

The consequences of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are far-reaching and long-lasting. But our faith compels us to believe there is hope for each survivor.

Our faith calls us to stand for and with each person who has faced (or continues to face) such abuse. And it requires us to act. To be the hands and feet of Jesus, showing love in the most practical ways, where it’s needed most.



Photo: Elijah Muweza/Tearfund

Judith is 27 and has two children. They live in the Central African Republic (CAR).

After enduring an emotionally and physically abusive relationship, she is now being healed and restored day by day with the help of a loving family. And central to this restoration is a training centre set up by Esther, a woman who had taken part in Tearfund's Transforming Communities training.

Judith was in her third year at university studying human resources when she became pregnant with her first child. Her parents wanted her to carry on with her studies, but her boyfriend wouldn't let her.

'He started abusing me, both physically and mentally,' Judith says. 'He was a drunk. The time I spent with him was the hardest I've ever had. He'd beat me. He was unfaithful.'

When Judith left her boyfriend, her parents supported her and her baby.

'My parents have been looking after her and me. To this day, they still help with her. My father was the first person I told when I found out I was pregnant. He's a pastor. Then he told my mother. They were both angry and disappointed.'

Unable to finish her studies, Judith started small businesses selling things but had lost her confidence. That's when she became interested in the training centre run by Esther.

Esther had taken part in Tearfund's Transforming Communities programme: a Bible-based guided training approach that equips people to identify the resources they already have. The programme offers training in how to set up and manage a small business, and provides other income-boosting ideas and inspiration.

Judith shares, 'Even though I knew how to read and write, I wanted to get vocational training. With tailoring, I feel like I'm getting a skill that will help me put food on the table. Being with other girls and women and learning together is empowering, and we support each other. Most of us have been through tough times. But we have hope.'



Modelling healthy relationships

‘Our country needs women working for our society, not just men,’ says Judith. ‘I like how my parents live; they work together, support each other, and agree on how to move forward. When my father does something, my mother contributes too. They share their ideas and work on them together, and that’s helped our family to be stable and united. I’d like to be in a relationship like that.’

‘Being able to study at the training centre will open new doors for me because of the skills I’m learning. Besides literacy and tailoring, we’ve learned knitting. Mama Esther shares all her skills and gives us good advice to help us be strong, have hope and aim for good things. I hope to have my own tailoring workshop one day soon and make beautiful outfits.’

‘I now give advice to young people to make good choices in their lives so they can build a better future.’

Prayer points

**You will need paper and a pen/pencil.*

- Pray that God will help survivors to find safe spaces in their communities, especially their churches – spaces where violence is not accepted so that they can experience life to the full
- Pray that God will help survivors to heal, and that he will bind up their wounds
- Pray for women and girls to access opportunities and have the freedom, in every context, to thrive and to fulfil their God-given potential
- Pray for God to raise up men who will champion women. Pray that they will speak out against gender injustice and will help to open doors that have previously been unfairly shut based on people’s gender.