

# ONE VOICE

TOGETHER IN PRAYER FOR AN **END TO POVERTY**

## **BLIND... BUT NOT WITHOUT VISION**

**Everyone said it couldn't be done. They told her she was blind – but really, they were the ones who couldn't see.**

Ariana\* is 11 years old. Like many other girls her age, she longs to achieve – to be someone who does something in the world.

But Ariana is blind.

There shouldn't be a 'but' in front of that sentence. It speaks of limits and impossibilities. It crushes hope. And that's what the people around Ariana did too.

### **A small, small world**

Ariana's family came from a place in Afghanistan where education for a blind person wasn't considered an option. They just couldn't see how she, or her younger brother, who is also blind, would be able to manage at school. Both children were missing out on learning and socialising. As they got bigger, their world seemed to be getting smaller.

Then, four years ago, they moved to Kabul, Afghanistan's capital city. There the family met one of Tearfund's partners, who offered for teachers to come and work with the children in their home.

At first, the work seemed difficult, but they pressed on. 'Soon,' Ariana says, 'I finished the primary steps and was enrolled into school.' The principal was reluctant to accept her, but finally the school gave Ariana a place. And she shone.

### **A world of possibilities**

'When the school teachers asked me questions about the lesson taught the day before,' says Ariana, 'I gave them the right answers... During my examinations, I earned higher scores than the students who could see.'

Ariana is teaching the people around her to see possibilities where, before, they saw only limits.

'All of the teachers and the principal are very happy with me. They are encouraging me in my lessons, and they are telling other students to help me along the way.'

Now Ariana dreams of being a teacher for blind students in the future.

In a world where blindness can be associated with darkness, Ariana is bringing hope and light – widening the horizons of others as she works hard to increase her own.

## PLEASE PRAY

- Thank God for Ariana's opportunity to go to school and pray that she will continue to be encouraged as she aims to be a light for others in the future.
- Pray for all people living with a disability – that they will not be disabled by the attitudes of those around them.
- Praise God for the teachers from Tearfund's partner organisation, and for their willingness to speak out for Ariana. Pray that they will be blessed as they continue to stand up for children like her.

*\*Name has been changed to protect identity*

## A NOTE FROM...

'There is much in the news this week of the violence, despair and hopelessness affecting ordinary Afghans. In the midst of it all, Tearfund's partners continue to serve people like Ariana and her family with courage and dedication, giving me hope for this tragic country.'

**Bruce Clarke, Head of Tearfund's work in Afghanistan**

## A SLOW-BURNING SUCCESS

*Written by David Mutua, Tearfund's Communications Officer for Southern and East Africa.*

**An innovative way to cook food is being used in Malawi and it's being championed by a young environmentalist, who was trained by Tearfund.**

Malawi has a huge deforestation problem. Leading Malawian scholar, Susan Ngwira, says deforestation is estimated to be responsible for the loss of 33,000 hectares per year. It's so serious that, according to Reuters, in 2017 the government launched 24-hour patrols to protect the country's major forests from deforestation and illegal logging.

But communities are now being taught how to build stoves which use less wood, meaning they're more environmentally friendly. In February 2019, Tearfund's partner AG Care, asked members of Chatewa Village to take part in a training programme to learn how to build the stoves.

### **Growing enthusiasm**

For 24-year-old Kires Phiri, a passionate conservationist, it was what she'd been waiting for. 'The stoves are very important as they help us conserve the environment,' she says.

'Firewood that would ordinarily be used in one month now takes three months, all thanks to these stoves.'

Her enthusiasm for the project has led her to build 42 stoves in her village within the first three months of receiving the training.

'It feels good to see the village transforming as people use less firewood. The environment provides us with many things, including fruits and medicines. And when you use energy saving stoves you are using less firewood, meaning the forest can develop and grow,' Kires explained.

### **Keeping trees**

And there are further benefits of these new stoves. Previously, using lots of firewood meant the excess smoke affected people's eyes and sometimes caused breathing problems.

Kires says: 'My eyes would get really sore and dry but with these new stoves, I have never experienced that problem.'

AG Care's Project Officer, Mirriam Yona, adds: 'The energy-saving stoves are being promoted in the communities because they reduce, by a third, the amount of wood used compared to a traditional cooking stove. They also improve cleanliness, as well as being quicker and safer for cooking.'

Kires wants to get even more involved in environmental conservation and is now sharing the knowledge she received from the training. She believes that with more energy-saving stoves, the forests in her homeland will now have the chance to grow back faster and so help the environment to be restored to what it once was.

## **PLEASE PRAY**

Father God,

Thank you for advances in technology and innovation. We know it can sometimes be misused, causing harm to people and the environment, but we also know that it can be used for good. Thank you for the example of Kires in Malawi who is pioneering stoves which mean fewer trees are cut down. Please help those who are working on the forefront of the campaign to curb deforestation.

In Jesus' name, amen.

## **UNWEAVING THE WEB**

**It all began with a simple prayer in a women's fellowship. Now Annette and her team are tackling the blight of prostitution and the sexual exploitation of children in Uganda.**

If you live in Kampala, Uganda's capital, it's hard to miss the city's prostitutes. 'I'd always driven around the city and seen them but, somehow, they felt detached from us,' remembers Annette Kirabira.

Annette is the executive director of Rahab Uganda, an NGO dedicated to helping girls and young women affected by prostitution and human trafficking. 'Back then, they were nameless and faceless to us.'

### **Dangerous prayer**

When I ask how the women and girls came to mean so much more, Annette answers 'I like to say we prayed a dangerous prayer.'

That prayer was offered up at a women's prayer fellowship in 2005. 'We were praying, "Lord, what exactly would you want us to do in our city?"' The answer didn't take long to materialise...

Two daughters of a fellowship member experienced a disturbing scene one night in the capital.

'They heard screaming and they set off to find out what was happening. A girl was thrown out of a moving car, but her dress got trapped by the door. She was dragged on the tarmac on her back. When the men in the car realised this, they opened the car door again, dropped her onto the road, and drove off.'

The girl was from Burundi, as were the two daughters, allowing them to talk. The girl had come to Uganda, having been told that prostitution was lucrative there.

The two daughters called their mother and, together, they took the girl to the nearest hospital. The women from the fellowship befriended her with food and support. However, there was a tragic twist to the tale.

'The girl had two pimps, so after two days they abducted her from the hospital and we didn't see her again,' says Annette.

### **The calling**

The women of the fellowship decided that the tragic incident showed God's answer to their prayer 'what shall we do?' And so, tentatively at first, they began to offer care for some of the people caught in prostitution – often these were young girls.

'We knew nothing about prostitution and pimping,' says Annette. 'The only thing we knew was how to love and care for them, so that's what we did. Our whole ministry came from the question "what would we do for our daughters?" That was what we tried to do for these girls.'

The fellowship set up a residential home for some of the girls and the project slowly grew. Annette had been reluctant to get too deeply involved – she had been studying for a new career in counselling. She even thought of leaving the Wednesday morning fellowship altogether, but felt the Holy Spirit urge her to stay.

Finally in 2008 she took charge of the work, as it launched as an autonomous organisation, apart from the ladies fellowship.

'I remember thinking "what have I just agreed to?"' Annette recalls. 'I don't know anyone in this city and I'm not a good fundraiser. But God has been good and he's compensated for all of my weaknesses.'

### **A worldwide web**

One thing that God did provide for Rahab Uganda were partnerships – and it opened up their world, almost literally:

'We were trying to find out about human trafficking, but we didn't really understand it. Then one day I was watching CNN and I saw this organisation based in Bangkok. Something about them resonated with me.'

Annette got in touch with the founder, a Thai missionary called Jane\*, and they started corresponding. 'Then one day she called me to say "Annette, there are Ugandan girls that need to be rescued from Thailand. Will you receive them if we send them back?"'

Annette agreed and their work grew rapidly.

She soon discovered that the tentacles of trafficking extended much, much further. 'Since 2008 we've been helping to return women from all over, including Saudi Arabia and Oman,' she explains. 'Every day, I get a minimum of one reported case of somebody who needs to be repatriated from the Arab world – today I got two.'

Rahab Uganda has grown far beyond its original single refuge and its remit has expanded too. Their stated mission is: 'To restore the self-image of girls affected by sexual exploitation and human trafficking, to empower them to proactively engage in personal transformation.'

With a residential home and a drop-in centre, Annette and her team reach out to the most vulnerable. Their aim is no quick fix: it's to allow the women and girls to recover from their traumatic past and build a better future.

'We offer medical help, because many of them will come back with all kinds of infections – especially if it was sexual exploitation. There's a counselling program so they can begin to process everything that's happened. Then we are able to offer training to help them find a career or even start their own businesses.'

### **Better than cure**

Annette says she is hopeful for the future, not least because she's now being supported by many of the women they had originally helped – as they leave university or as their businesses flourish.

She stresses that all the girls' future successes are ultimately based on one firm foundation:

'The key thing all of these girls need is unconditional love. Many of them wonder if God really cares about them at all. We are strong on building their self-worth. It's not what I think about you, or what your parents think about you. What does Christ think about you? That's the only true foundation I know.'

### **PLEASE PRAY**

Loving God, God of mercy and justice, thank you for the remarkable work of women and men like Annette. Please bless and expand the work of Rahab across Uganda and Africa. Empower more of your children around the world to respond to the terrible evils of trafficking and prostitution. Amen

## **PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD**



In Burkina Faso, thousands of schools have been closed due to violence. Since 2014, the country has seen an increasing number of deadly attacks, which have forced over 9,000 teachers out of work. Hundreds of thousands of children have been affected. Please pray for security and peace, and for the relief of families, communities and churches in the country.



Dengue fever has hospitalised nearly 9,000 people in Nepal this year – including almost 4,000 in the last eight weeks. Pray for people mourning the loss of loved ones and those suffering themselves. Pray for temperatures to drop to prevent more mosquitoes from hatching and spreading the disease.



Clashes between armed groups in the Central African Republic (CAR) town of Birao left at least 23 dead at the weekend. Armed groups still control the majority of the country, and one in four Central Africans have been forced from their homes. Please pray for the people of CAR, that God will comfort and protect them.