



By Gillian Southey, CWS communications coordinator.

Working With the Hope Experts

Building a new country out of the ruins of war and neglect is not an easy task. Neither is finding food and dignity for people in a country with a booming economy but the world's highest number of hungry people. CWS partners are making inroads on poverty and recording some extraordinary successes. The money CWS supporters have given is helping partners like the Maridi Service Agency (MSA) in South Sudan and the Women's Development Resource Centre in South India stem hunger and restore dignity. It's very simple, with more support they can get more people out of the hunger trap.

Young men like Kefa Samuel Joseph from South Sudan want a better future. Kefa aged 21 grew up during Sudan's civil war that lasted until 2005. He enrolled at primary school in 1999 but after three years had to drop out because his mother could no longer afford the fees and equipment. Instead Kefa worked on the family farm, helping to grow cassava, grains, groundnuts and millet. He was lucky. Bishop Joseph Marona saw his potential and from 2004-2010 took him to school in Uganda. However, when he returned to Maridi there were no jobs.

South Sudan's independence in July 2011 signalled new hope for people who had suffered through 22 years of war. The country had few roads, no services, a tiny economy and no system of government. Tensions remained on key issues with Sudan. South Sudan cut off the oil pipeline through Sudan which meant the government had no money.

Kefa had dreams but no experience or job. When

MSA's radio station Maridi FM advertised a three month computer course for secondary schools, Kefa immediately rushed down to pick up an application. In June 2012 he graduated and by mid-July had got a data controller job in the aviation sector of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. He is now earning money for his family and wants to do further studies in East Africa.

"I thank MSA so much for supporting me with the knowledge which has enabled me to get a job and improve my life so much. May God bless MSA and all those who support MSA to continue helping the Youth of Maridi improve their life."

For Mrs Rajalaksmi, a gypsy woman from South India, it is the Women's Development Resource Centre (WDRC) that has put her on a path to prosperity. >>



Kefa Samuel Joseph Photo: MSA

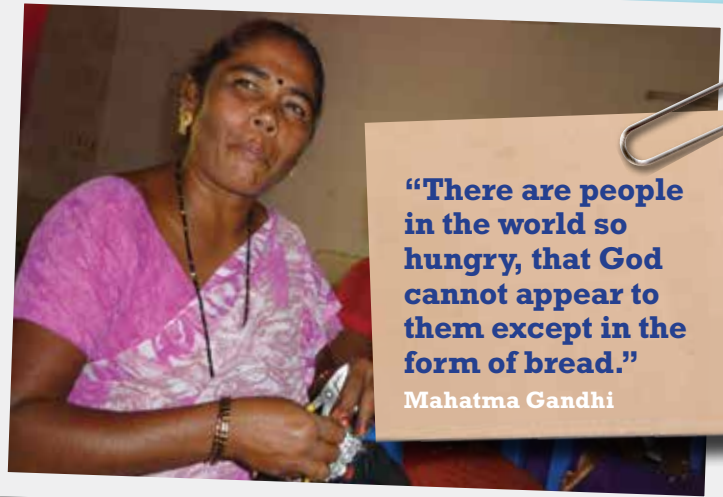


Now the president of the Gypsy Women's Sangam (Association), she has made huge strides for her family and community. She cannot read or write but has learned how to make a case for the semi-itinerant gypsies. With a strong track record of working with communities that are ignored or treated without respect in Indian society, the WDRC has helped her get land for a house, a Voter ID and a ration card (all government entitlements). Like the tribal peoples and Dalit communities they work with, these communities are learning to demand what is theirs.

"In our life it is a great achievement for me and now I got recognition at the revenue department and collectorate (local administration office) and the collector (chief administrator) also made two visits to our places. We fixed our sangam name board at the main road and the government officials send communication by post to my address as the president. I am proud of myself and our community members associated as a movement in Tamil Nadu and in the WDRC."

More hungry people live in India than any country in the world although it has a booming economy. South Sudan is near the bottom of all development tables and has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world. Poverty means people miss out on their fundamental human right to a decent life.

CWS is committed to partnerships with groups like the WDRC and MSA who have the skills and the experience to make change happen. WDRC has helped many groups improve their livelihoods and is regularly asked to help others. The MSA has a vision for the whole country. Already they are providing preschool and secondary school education, especially for girls. They help returning refugees reintegrate and deal with the trauma of the war. They run the



"There are people in the world so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread."

Mahatma Gandhi

Mrs Rajalaksmi Photo: Trish Murray CWS

only radio station, provide health and civic education, organise sports events and computer training. They are determined to expand their work beyond Maridi to the rest of their country.

For CWS national director Pauline McKay it is the expertise of the partners that is so remarkable.

"They work alongside the communities – so that everybody wins. They make change happen in such a way that hope and dignity are restored to groups that are largely invisible to those around them. Whether it is demanding their right to food or providing schools where there is none, they do this with the support you give to CWS," she said.

Helping people out of poverty requires specialist skills and a genuine commitment to those affected. CWS acknowledges all those who are taking part in the Live Below the Line challenge from 23-27 September to end extreme poverty. For five days participants will spend just \$2.25 a day on food, raising funds for the WDRC. You can read more or sponsor someone at www.livebelowtheline.com/nz-cws ■

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