



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

FRONTLINE FAITH



Thank you for
coming alongside
these Christians
in India >>>

Persecuted  But never alone.

FEBRUARY
2020

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“We never knew people would... help us”

Thank you for helping Neesa and her family in India!

In a remote village in India lies a cluster of hastily built mud huts. Living here is a handful of Christian families who've suffered some kind of persecution in the past and have been expelled from their villages because of their faith.

Your support enabled the Open Doors team to meet with some of these banished families, including Neesa (55) and her family, who fled their village almost 10 years ago.

“Back in my village, my husband used to drink heavily every day,” shares Neesa. “He [became] unwell because of this addiction. It was an extremely difficult time for us because apart from the treatment expenses, he had [made] a big loan which [we] weren’t able to pay back.”


During this tough time, Neesa and her children came to know Christ. *“When my children and I started going to church, my husband became very violent and started beating us every day. My children and I ran away from home [to get away from the abuse]. Since we embraced the Christian faith, even [my] parents wouldn’t offer us any help.”*

Eventually, Neesa’s husband died from his illness and alcohol addiction. Sadly, Neesa and her son, who was just a teenager at the time, were left to pay off the loan her husband had made. Her family struggled to make ends meet from the marginal income they made from raising and milking a few goats.

Thankfully, they were able to earn a better living after Open Doors partners like you provided them with the resources they needed to buy more goats and start a small business to sustain their family.

Neesa’s daughter, Sheela (25), who is now married and has her own daughter, is so thankful for the assistance you helped make possible.

“We’re so blessed with all the help that Open Doors partners provided us,” says Sheela. “We live in this remote place – we never knew people would come in search of us and help us this way. Thank you so much. We earn better now. In fact, I’m able to send my daughter to a better school.”

Thank you for coming alongside these Christians, when those around them have rejected them because they follow Jesus. 

Your brave young brothers are grateful for you!



Jeovani, Dieu Fera and Steven in 2015.

Jeovani, Dieu Fera and Steven were very young when their lives were changed forever.

In 2013, extremist Muslims fired three grenades at their church in Bangui, Central African Republic. One grenade fell at Jeovani's feet – and he lost both his legs. His friends, Steven and Dieu Fera, were caught in the explosion too – and each lost a leg.

But thankfully, supporters like you keep coming alongside them when they need it the most.

Jeovani is sad about his legs. But he's not angry at those who did this to him. God has strengthened him, so he can say:

"If I should meet the Muslim man who shot the grenades at my church, I'll not be angry. I'll say: 'God forgives you, and He wants me to forgive you too.'"

Your support helps these three boys as they keep growing and need new prosthetics.

"Once or twice a year I grow so much that my artificial legs become too small," shares Jeovani. "When they start to hurt me, I need to get new artificial legs that are bigger."

The boys are thankful that you're helping to provide their schooling as well. Steven says:

"I'm happy that you pay my school fees and buy the books and pens and [a] bag so that I can go to school like the other children. May God bless you."

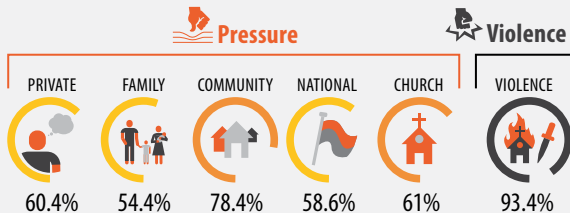
Praise God for helping these three boys forgive those extremists who attacked their church. And thank you for supporting your brave young brothers!



The three boys can smile again today, thanks to your support!

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

RANKING **25** | WWL SCORE **68**



2020 Ranking #25

Region Africa

Christian population 74.6%

Government Presidential Republic

Source of persecution

Organised corruption and crime

Christians in the Central African Republic (CAR) face persecution from three sides: Islamic extremists, organised crime and government corruption. The continuing violence that began in 2013 was largely between Seleka, an Islamic extremist group, and anti-Balaka, a group made up of animists and nominal Christians. Christian leaders have condemned the actions of anti-Balaka militants, who've effectively become criminal gangs. The conflict has resulted in the displacement of thousands of Christians. Believers from a Muslim Background also face pressure from their families and communities.

Your support helps strengthen the Church here through training to build up believers facing persecution, enhanced discipleship training, economic empowerment programmes, trauma care and social rehabilitation for persecuted believers.

Pray with us:

- + That God will change the hearts of extremists who target Christians.
- + That persecuted believers will know God's peace and provision.
- + That the work you're partnering in with Open Doors will bear fruit and that believers would be strengthened and encouraged by your care and compassion.



WORLD WATCH LIST

www.opendoors.org.za/wwl

Martina says:

“God sent you to bring encouragement to me”

Just as Martina in Nigeria was tearfully remembering how her husband, Joseph, had been murdered for his faith three years ago, God brought encouragement to her door.

At that moment, Open Doors worker Hanna* came to visit her and pass on a hug, letters from friends like you and good news of our continuing support.

When Martina saw Hanna, she said: *“My heart was so heavy, because it was the third [anniversary] of Joseph’s death. Last night I dreamt that you came and visited me! God sent you to bring encouragement to me at the time I needed it most!”*

It hasn’t been an easy road for Martina, but God has been faithful and has used friends like you to encourage and support her.

“When I lost my best friend, life was not the same for me. I had no one to rely on. I felt alone and rejected. But you came to my village to pray for me and encourage me.”

Life is never easy for widows in northern Nigeria. Many end up nearly destitute as extended family exploit them instead of care for them.

But together with you, Open Doors is helping Martina by rebuilding her house, supporting her children’s education and providing a loan to help her little rice-selling business to sustain her family. Thank you for being the family Martina needs in her time of need.



*Name changed for security purposes.



IN THE TRENCHES

You're strengthening Sadia in her battle to survive

Sadia* is a 19-year-old Believer from a Muslim Background living in Cameroon. She bravely became a Christian three years ago. And a year later, her spiritual battle intensified as she was diagnosed with cancer and had to undergo two surgeries and aggressive chemotherapy.

Before her first surgery, Sadia told Open Doors workers that she was ready to die and meet her Saviour, Jesus Christ. Her only wish was for her family members to come to faith in Jesus through her death. But the Lord had different plans, and Sadia survived, even though recovery took a long time.

Your generosity enables an Open Doors team to visit and encourage Sadia as she continues to undergo treatment. You're helping your young sister in Christ meet her many medical expenses, including the surgery and chemotherapy, as well as mitigating the effects of the chemo, including blood transfusions that are sometimes necessary.

"I thank you all who care for me and who are praying for me," says Sadia. "May God bless you. As you're committed [to] God's Word and helping the suffering, may God also help you as you help others."

Even though Sadia shows great courage, this isn't an easy road for her. Thank you for your faithful support to strengthen her as she continues her battle.

*Name changed for security purposes.

Their church was bombed – but you're blessing these children!

Alvaro (7) and Trinity (6) were injured three years ago when their church in Samarinda, Indonesia, was bombed – and they're still undergoing surgery and medical treatments to recover from the attack.

The good news is that your support helped make it possible for Alvaro to start first-grade elementary school. Grateful for you, his mother Novita says: *"He's very happy and excited to start school. He prepared everything weeks before school started, like his school uniform and polishing his shoes."*

As for Trinity, she's still undergoing operations to fix her fingers, elbow and knee – and your support has helped enable her to get that much-needed surgery. Trinity's mother sends this message to Open Doors friends like you: *"Thank you, may you always be a blessing for Christians and the world. Jesus bless you!"*

Please continue to pray:

- ◆ For strength and patience for these families as they continue to walk this long road to healing.
- ◆ For recovery, both physically and mentally, for the children as well as their parents.
- ◆ That God will give them abundant joy, endurance and patience, and that even in their darkest hours, they'll continue to hope in God's promises.



FROM JAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Dear partner of the persecuted Church,

Paul writes in Ephesians 5:19–20: *"Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Even though Paul's life was full of challenges because he chose Jesus, he still writes that we should always give thanks to God for everything.

When I read the stories of our persecuted family, such as Jeovani and his friends on page 3, and recall the testimonies that I hear when visiting our brothers and sisters, one thing that stands out for me is this:

How thankful they are.

I think of my own life, and how quickly I get upset about things such as load shedding or low water levels. It's so easy to focus on the negative. Thinking of the stories and testimonies from the most persecuted believers, I find that they're like a continuation of the Book of Acts. And it's as if I can hear Paul saying: *"Give thanks."*

It's then that I realise there are many lessons that we, as the Church in Southern Africa, can learn from our persecuted family to help us in our everyday walk with the Lord.

May God open our eyes not only to these lessons, but also to the plight of our brothers and sisters who are under the greatest threat for following Jesus.

Thank you for standing with us in prayer and support for them – and for making the *Never Alone* Campaign such a great success! You're helping people like Jeovani, Steven and Dieu Fera to know that they're never alone!

Like to hear more? Invite Open Doors to come and share valuable insights with your church or community group. Visit www.opendoors.org.za/contact.

Together in His service,



Jan Gouws
Executive Director
Open Doors Southern Africa



Kindly note that from March, you'll receive your newsletter every two months – this is so we can better serve the persecuted Church together.

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