

Burkina Faso: Widow Sponsorship Programme

Background - Burkina Faso as a country has few natural resources and poor economic prospects. 90% of its population is involved in subsistence agriculture so the shortage of rain in recent years has had a devastating effect on the people's livelihood leading to famine in many areas of Burkina Faso. Prices of commodities have risen, such as electricity and water, and thus many people are unable to pay for the basic necessities of life from their meagre monthly income. Consequently many get loans to enable them to feed their families and once in debt, it is very hard to break free. These financial problems have led to a widespread increase in corruption.

According to our ROPEholder, desperation and hunger have led to many people gathering any kind of sand and small stones to sell, which exacerbates soil erosion. Although the stones are not good for building purposes there will always be buyers who collect them to make bricks. The city authorities try to stop such activities but as they can't find these people any other solution to earn a living, such actions have little effect.

However, there are many widows our ROPEholder has identified that cannot even collect stones for a living; they are the poorest of the poor. Many suffer from poor health and so are unable to work. They cannot afford to eat and if they do, the food is of poor quality. Their illnesses are not treated as they can't afford the medication. They have to have a 200CFA down payment to even get to see a nurse before they can pay for the drugs so many resort to dubious roadside drug sellers. Some of the widows have children but they are unable to help, being unemployed themselves or on such a meagre salary that they can't provide the food and medication needed.

The aim of our ROPEholder is to... *"provide relief for the widows...change their situation so that they can have a better old age condition. Together with ROPE and the current sponsors, we want to strengthen the widows in their areas of need such as food and medication"*. An initiative also taken is to aid the more capable widows to start a trade enabling them to become more self-sufficient and increasing their self worth.

The Scheme – £15 a month will enable a widow living in the area of Ougadougou to join the scheme. Sponsorship will provide the widow with nourishing food, clothing, medical aid including medicine for malaria and antibiotics. In addition they are supplied with a much needed mosquito net and lenses for those who struggle to see. In many cases, sponsorship is used to aid the widow to start a trade, bringing self-satisfaction as they are doing something to help themselves. In return, ROPE will provide an annual update on the development of the scheme including the programme's general progress, specific stories of individuals in the scheme and photographs.

Left-hand Photo: widows receiving their vitally needed mosquito net



Right-hand Photo: a widow receiving grain for survival

