

COMPASSION

MAGAZINE

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2019 ISSUE 2

different

PATH



A SPECIAL TOGO EDITION



Releasing children from poverty
Compassion
in Jesus' name

Matching your
donations with







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-  Download the new Compassion UK App from the App Store or Google Play. For more details visit www.compassionuk.org/app
-  Look out for this symbol on pages that contain video content.
-  Launch the 'Compassion Scanner' which you can find in the menu bar of the Compassion UK App.
-  Fill your screen with the page and watch it come to life – giving you extra insights into life in Togo!

Get started by using the 'Compassion Scanner' to bring your front cover to life and watch Ama's story.



A group of children from Togo outside their Compassion project.
Photographer: Ben Adams

SOURCE: WORLD BANK

DEAR FRIENDS,

Courageous. Resilient. Devoted. These are the three words that come to mind when reading Nicole's story (page 8).

Togo, where Nicole calls home, is a beautiful and culturally diverse country with 37 tribal ethnic groups. But it's also plagued with the complexities of poverty.



In Togo, women like Nicole face the terrifying reality that, in their lifetime, 1 in 58 women die in pregnancy or childbirth. For those who deliver safely, the risks are not over. Tragically, 1 in 20 children won't live to see their first birthday – often from completely preventable causes.

If you think that's shocking, I'm right with you.

Reduction in maternal and child mortality is one of the priorities under Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 'Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages'.

For Compassion, this means reaching children early, because we believe that our child development model is most effective when we start with an expectant mother. From the womb to early adulthood, our local church partners ensure that children are nurtured in all areas of life, so they can step into adulthood as empowered men and women.

Different Path, Compassion's very first Matched Giving appeal, is a new and exciting opportunity as we seek to accelerate our work so that every child receives the very best start in life. With nearly 385 million children living in extreme poverty, Compassion is committed to widening its partnership to ensure we're playing our part to reach the commitment made in the SDGs to end poverty by 2030.

Thanks to the generous support of UK supporters, at the time of print £503,306 (before Aid Match) had already been raised to provide life-saving support for mums and babies in Togo. Before 24 June 2019, all donations given to our Different Path appeal will be doubled, thanks to the generosity of the UK government.

Thank you for the part you're playing.

JUSTIN DOWDS

Chief Executive Officer
Compassion UK and Compassion Ireland

WELCOME TO TOGO

In West Africa, a region known for its boisterous and outgoing cultures, Togo is an outlier. Nestled between Ghana, Benin and Burkina Faso, the Togolese people are known for being more reserved than their west coast neighbours.

From the palm-fringed coastline of Lomé, to the lush green forest and mountain ridges, the geography of Togo is as diverse as the 37 ethnic groups that form the population of 7.6 million people.

Despite the country's beautiful landscape, people and culture, Togo is one of the world's poorest countries. In rural areas, 69% of households live below the poverty line, defined by the World Bank as less than \$1.90 USD a day.

SOURCES: UNICEF, WORLD BANK

1^{IN} 20
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27% OF CHILDREN
AGED 5-14 ARE
ENGAGED IN
CHILD LABOUR



COOK LIKE ADJO MAKE AN AUTHENTIC TOGOLESE DISH

Adjo has helped prepare delicious meals at her local church-based Compassion project since 2012. In Togo, the most popular food is maize, which is made into a porridge. This simple dish is often served with stew or soup, a staple for most Compassion-supported children.

CHICKEN PEANUT STEW

Serves 4-6 people

Make a delicious vegetarian version by swapping the chicken for squash or sweet potato.

INGREDIENTS:

8 chicken thighs or 2 large sweet potatoes/1 squash
1 large onion, chopped
1-2 cloves garlic, crushed
2 fresh medium tomatoes, chopped
2 tbs tomato puree
1 chicken or vegetable stock cube
1 cup of peanut butter
Salt and pepper to taste
2 cups water

METHOD:

1. Season the chicken with salt and pepper.
2. Add 1 tbsp of oil to a large frying pan or casserole dish and brown the chicken on all sides over a medium heat. You may need to do this in batches.
3. Add the onions and garlic to the chicken and fry until soft.
4. Meanwhile, in a blender, add the peanut butter, chopped tomatoes, tomato puree and water. Blend until you have a fine paste.
5. Stir the peanut paste into the chicken and leave on a low heat, stirring occasionally. Leave for 30-40 mins to reduce and for the sauce to thicken.

THE 5-YEAR-OLD RESCUED FROM A VOODOO TEMPLE

Akloblessi took her first breath in the shadows of a voodoo shrine. Her parents met there and fell in love years earlier. When it was time to bring their baby girl into the world, the familiarity of the temple seemed the perfect place. They didn't know it yet, but in five years' time, voodoo would try to claim their daughter.

AKLOBLESSI'S STORY

The first indication that something was wrong was when Akloblessi didn't turn up to her Compassion project. Staff were shocked when they discovered that this precious little girl had been kidnapped by the temple priestess from the local voodoo shrine.

Nowhere else in the world is voodoo as widespread or visible as in Togo. The religion was born in West Africa, and

'Vodoun', as it is known there, is a part of everyday life for millions of people.

Akloblessi's parents seemed powerless to fight the decision of the priestess. Vodoun priests and priestesses are revered in their community. But knowing the grim conditions Akloblessi would endure, Fernand, Akloblessi's Compassion project director was determined to free her. When other children her age were attending school and playing with friends, she was expected to drink animal

blood and consume raw meat for rituals.

Fernand mobilised the Christian church community, co-ordinating 11 Compassion church partners to pray and fast for Akloblessi's freedom. He began lobbying government social workers to intervene. He even reached out to the priestess to convince her to release the little girl. Every day, along with his team, he lifted Akloblessi up in prayer.

"We were not afraid of the priestess and her team even



“

I AM SO HAPPY TO SEE MY FRIENDS AND HAVE FUN WITH THEM AGAIN.”

though they intimidated us a lot,” says Fernand. Throughout their meetings, the priestess and her team chanted incantations but the church held firm.

Months went by with seemingly little progress. As Akloblessi's fifth birthday approached, project staff asked for permission to visit her at the shrine.

"I remember when Uncle Fernand and his people came in the shrine," recalls Akloblessi with a smile. "I was so happy because they brought food and clothing. My friends in the project also sent greetings."

"When they left, I kept on crying because I wanted to follow them," she adds.

Afterwards, Akloblessi couldn't stop thinking of home. For days, tears streamed down her face as she begged to leave. At last, moved by her distress, the priestess agreed to give the child her freedom. The church's prayers were answered. She was able to return home.

Akloblessi's arrival at the project was met with cheers, hugs and congratulations.

"I am so happy to see my friends and have fun with them again," beams Akloblessi. As she learns how to be a carefree child again, the project workers are providing this treasured young girl with the emotional and spiritual support she needs to thrive.



Use the Compassion App to watch exclusive footage of Akloblessi's project. Simply launch the 'Compassion Scanner' in the app and fill your screen with the page. See inside the front cover for more details.





“
I BECAME
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ABOUT THE
FUTURE.”

different

PATH



Nicole has spent her life fighting for survival, but with the help of the Compassion Child Survival project, this resilient young woman is now building a stable future for her family.

Nicole was orphaned as a child, abandoned by her first husband, and badly abused by her second husband.

“He would punish me, and refuse to give me food,” she remembers. She was so afraid that she eventually fled in fear for her life.

She was two months pregnant when she arrived at the home of her elderly uncle in the rural community of Glope, around 60km north of Togo’s capital, Lomé. Nicole was relieved to be free from the daily abuse, but she was dangerously ill.

A HEALTHY START

Sadly, Nicole’s situation is not unique. Across Togo, too many women and babies are denied the healthy start in life that they need. Many cannot afford the basic healthcare, nutrition and medical support that could save their lives. As a result, 1 in 20 children don’t live long enough to celebrate their first birthday and 1 in 58 women die in pregnancy or childbirth.

Nicole could have become another statistic, were it not for the intervention of the



Child Survival project at the Temple of God Church. When community workers from the local church saw how ill Nicole was, they immediately registered her into the Child Survival project.

With access to antenatal care, medical support and nutrition, Nicole was able to regain her strength and support the baby in her womb. “Every month, we received food kits and hygiene kits from the programme. I became healthy before giving birth to my child and this made me so happy,” she beams.

CHURCH FAMILY

Having been orphaned at a young age and so badly

abused by both her husbands, Nicole found it hard to trust anyone. But in the church, she discovered an extended family who know her, love her and are committed to protecting her and her children. “With Compassion, I became hopeful about the future,” she says with tears of joy in her eyes.

Daniella, her youngest daughter, is now 11 months old and Nicole has great peace of mind in knowing that when Daniella is old enough, she will transition into the Child Development Sponsorship Programme. The project has completely turned Nicole’s life around and she has one message for supporters back in the UK – “Thank you for changing my life!”

Help save the lives of women and babies in Togo by supporting our Different Path appeal.

We want to raise enough funds to support our Child Survival projects in Togo and help to expand others.

Until 24 June 2019, all public donations to Compassion UK’s Different Path appeal will be doubled by the UK government, up to £2 million.

Find out more at:

www.compassionuk.org/differentpath



A VISION FOR TOGO

AN INTERVIEW WITH PALAMANGA OUALI

We recently caught up with Palamanga Ouali, the Senior Director of Africa who works closely with National Directors across Africa.

Palamanga has been with Compassion for 10 years and recently spent 18 months as the National Director for Togo. He took time out of his busy schedule to share his passion for child development and his vision for Togo.



TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELF

I joined Compassion in 2009 and since January 2017, I've served as the Senior Regional Director, working closely with the National Directors across Africa.

I came to know Jesus when I was in primary school. The school was set up by missionaries in the East of Burkina Faso and they had an amazing impact on the whole region, despite limited resources. I think my passion for holistic child development has been born since then.

COMPASSION CURRENTLY SERVES MORE THAN 65,000 TOGOLESE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH 265 LOCAL CHURCH PARTNERS. WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR CHILDREN IN TOGO?

Our vision at Compassion Togo is that all children and young people who go through our programme will reach their unique potential. Together with the church, our dream is to create an environment

where mothers and babies in Togo can thrive, and every child is known, loved and protected.

YOU MENTIONED HOW YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE GAVE YOU A PASSION FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT. FOR YOU, WHY IS THE LOCAL CHURCH SO IMPORTANT IN DELIVERING THIS?

The local church has a unique advantage and responsibility for the development of children in its community. Compassion partners exclusively with the church for this reason, because the church knows their community, the culture and context.

Compassion's model is so important because it approaches child development in a way that is holistic: physical, socio-emotional, cognitive and spiritual. God has a loving heart for all children and Jesus exemplified how the church should love, care and interact with them not just as beneficiaries but as agents of their own development.



WHAT CHALLENGES DOES THE LOCAL CHURCH FACE WHEN MINISTERING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN TOGO?

One of the biggest challenges is a lack of strong primary school education especially in rural areas of Togo. This means our local church partners must find innovative ways to provide additional support to Compassion-supported children.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE DREAMS FOR COMPASSION IN TOGO?

In the future we'd love to partner with more churches in the north of the country where poverty is

particularly rampant. This region is the poorest in the country and local churches and communities lack in many areas such as potable water, adequate sanitation, classrooms and playgrounds. We hope to have a greater impact in these communities and ask for your prayers as we work towards this.

WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU GIVE OUR UK SUPPORTERS?

To all UK supporters – a big thank you! Thank you for your sacrifice. Thank you for putting a smile on the faces of so many beautiful children and thriving young adults. God bless you all.

ACTOR NAOMI SCOTT REFLECTS ON **EMPOWERING MUMS IN POVERTY**

British actor and singer, Naomi Scott, has recently appeared on cinema screens as Princess Jasmine in Disney's Aladdin remake. A passionate Compassion UK Ambassador, and sponsor for more than seven years, we caught up with Naomi following a recent trip to Rwanda to see Compassion's work as part of our Different Path appeal.



“

AT THE CHILD SURVIVAL PROJECT THE WOMEN ARE LOVED, THEY ARE ACCEPTED, AND THEY ARE EMPOWERED TO SECURE A HEALTHY FUTURE FOR THEM AND THEIR FAMILIES.”

A COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITY

“The women I met in Rwanda are so strong and resourceful. They can take something so small and make something of it. But many of them lack choice and they lack hope, which is so important.

“One of the most powerful moments for me was hearing Ernestine talk about the Child Survival project. She just lit up. It clearly meant so much to her. I think even I underestimated it. I underestimated the power of the community.”

Ernestine, who is pregnant with her third child, lives in the heart of a slum in Kigali. Life has been tough lately since she lost her job selling tomatoes when new legislation restricted food sales to official markets in Kigali with high rents and taxes.

Ernestine has recently been registered with a Compassion Child Survival project, run in partnership with her local church. Reflecting on why she's

so happy to be part of the project Ernestine says: “I am going to receive all that a mother needs when it gets towards giving birth. My dreams have been answered.”

After visiting Ernestine's home, Naomi was struck by the warm and loving community that she had found at the project. Naomi says:

“Ernestine, and a lot of women like her, have been through so much, whether that be neglect, abuse or just their daily struggles. Compassion is helping to address not just their practical needs but also their emotional needs, understanding the importance of mental health and how it has a knock-on effect on the rest of their lives.

“At the Child Survival project the women are loved, they are accepted, and they are empowered to secure a healthy future for them and their families. So much of that is about community. It's having someone to talk with, it's about friendship and having fun together.”

Naomi is raising awareness of the challenges faced by mums and babies in Togo as part of our Different Path appeal. Until the 24 June 2019, every donation you make will be doubled by the UK government. Find out more at www.compassionuk.org/differentpath



PRAY WITH US

Thank you for praying with us. Together our prayers are making a huge difference to the lives of children and families around the world.

REJOICE IN HOPE, BE PATIENT IN TRIBULATION, BE CONSTANT IN PRAYER.

Romans 12:12 ESV

PRAY FOR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Take a moment to pray for children facing mental health issues amidst the vulnerability of poverty. In many of the countries where we sponsor children, mental health problems can be misunderstood and stigmatised. Accessing mental health services can be nearly impossible. Our project staff members work tirelessly to help children and families, providing support and making a way for those impacted by mental health issues to find professional help.

Father God, we pray for children around the world who are affected by mental health issues. We pray no child would feel stigmatised or alone because of mental health. We pray particularly for the world's most vulnerable children who face mental health issues as well as the day to day battles of poverty. Amen.

ONE YEAR SINCE THE THAI CAVE RESCUE

This month marks a year since the dramatic rescue of the 12 boys and their coach from Chiang Rai cave.

We continue to praise God for the safe rescue of the Wild Boar football team. Join us in praying for their complete healing and recovery, especially around the anniversary as they remember their terrifying experience.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.
Joshua 1:9



A PRAYER FOR FATHERS AROUND THE WORLD

Heavenly Father, we pray for dads around the world this Father's Day. We think particularly of fathers living in poverty. Give strength to those who work long hours or struggle to find employment as they care for their families.

God our Father, please guide those of us who are fathers to care for our families with your wisdom.

And Lord, we pray for children like 16-year-old Shakira from Brazil, who have lost their fathers. We give you thanks that you are their source of peace and comfort. In Jesus' name, amen.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. 1 John 3:1

Join us in praying regularly for children with urgent needs and the wider work of Compassion by signing up to our fortnightly updates at: www.compassionuk.org/pray

different PATH

Sowaye never expected to be raising a child in her old age, but when her daughter died in childbirth, she couldn't abandon her granddaughter.

Compassion's Child Survival project run by the local church has filled Sowaye with hope.

While the regular provision of food, hygiene supplies and medical support have put the family on a much more stable footing, her greatest delight is in knowing that life is no longer a lonely fight for survival.

Read more stories here:

COMPASSIONUK.ORG/

DIFFERENT-PATH



Learn more about Sowaye – download the Compassion App and launch the 'Compassion Scanner' to bring her story to life.

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