

CONNECTING THROUGH MOTHERHOOD



Miriam Desborough and her family moved to Madagascar in February 2023. With her healthcare expertise as a nurse, Miriam will be partnering with others to help serve vulnerable women in Madagascar.



A STIRRED HEART

Long before I became a mother, God was growing my passion for vulnerable women. Through stories in the Bible, I saw God's heart towards women caught in dark situations, such as Rahab and Hagar. Studying Tropical Nursing broke my heart for women around the world experiencing health inequalities with limited access to basic care (e.g. antenatal provisions). Working with Tamar, a Christian charity reaching prostitutes in London, further fuelled my God-given passion and all this led to my family and me moving to Madagascar as missionaries. I long to reach marginalised women by showing and telling them the gospel.

DESPERATE TIMES

On a recent visit to one of the main areas of prostitution in central Antananarivo with Domoina, my friend and passionate advocate of vulnerable women, I was privileged to hear one woman's story first-hand. Illiterate and desperate, Sara* turned to prostitution ten years ago.

It was the only option she could see for survival. She lives in absolute squalor, and, because of her work, she now has two children. Her tiny two-roomed shack also houses other family members whom Sara provides for. Her ten-year-old son is ashamed of her work and dreams of his mum becoming a seller of fruit and veg - rather than her body.

When I asked Sara what her main worries were, she said they were innumerable but, with tears in her eyes, she shared her fears about her own death. I'm sure every mother worries what would happen to their children if something happened to them, as the parent. But imagine facing this fear without the safety net of family members or a welfare system stepping in to care for your child. Imagine knowing that you have no savings to provide for them if you were gone. Imagine the weight



of responsibility of knowing that feeding your children tomorrow depends on your ability to attract men and sell sex today.

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I can identify with Sara as a woman and mother. Although I've not experienced the same traumas, I can try to put myself in her shoes. I am hopeful that I can play my part in reaching women like Sara through helping existing organisations or establishing a new endeavour in partnership with Malagasies. Currently, I am still at the stage of researching the needs of women caught up in prostitution locally. There is a lot to understand about the complex situations of these women, but I am convinced that practical support needs to accompany gospel proclamation to have lasting impact in their lives.

Mother to mother I can relate to some of Sara's fears and anxieties, but I'm also

aware that her context exacerbates her predicament. In addition to all her worries as a mother, I can't bear to think of how degraded, ashamed, and helpless Sara must feel - as if she is totally unseen.

THE POWER OF GRACE

Often motherhood can feel like a large task, with overwhelming responsibilities, but it can also provide a unique perspective and opportunities that can help to befriend and draw in women. The gift of motherhood coupled with the gift of grace is a powerful thing. The good news of the gospel is for all women everywhere: each woman is valued and loved by God beyond any compassion we can show. Truly he is the "God who sees" (Gen 16:13). Will you let God use your experiences and position as a woman to show others that they are seen by him too?

PRAY

- Give thanks for the progress Miriam has made in understanding the context of local prostitutes and existing provisions for them.
- For guidance and wisdom in networking and partnering with passionate Malagasy individuals and organisations.
- That Christian women would use their unique opportunities to reach out to other women with the life-transforming gospel.

