Lone Survivor

"Oftentimes, I wonder if my mother has seen me but didn’t recognize me,” said 16-year-old Ginny.

Born in the Haitian countryside, Ginny was given up at birth. Her father, like her mother, has never been a part of her life. Until age four, she was sent from one place to another to live with different people she doesn’t remember, and spent some time living on the streets.

At age four, a woman started talking to her on the street. Learning her story, she took her home and life turned around for Ginny for a while. "I got to go to school for the first time!” Ginny said. “But after grade five, she stopped paying for my school and wouldn’t buy me any clothes," Ginny recalled. About the same time, a man living in the home began abusing her. "He would beat me and come to me at night and try to rape me. I would scream but no one answered," she recounted stoically. "I was so scared that I stopped sleeping at night." At age 14, Ginny told her surrogate mom what was happening and asked her to kick him out. "She didn’t, so I was the one who had to leave," she explained. "I moved in with a neighbor.”

Still unable to attend school, Ginny spent her days doing domestic service in this new home. Soon a relative of the family where she now lived started beating Ginny as well. Holding back many unjust details and painful memories, she simply summarized, "I’ve suffered a lot. No matter where I was, I wasn’t comfortable like I thought it would feel like if you were at home. Throughout it all," Ginny said, "I just wanted to go home, to my mother.”

"One day someone told me my mom had moved to Port-au-Prince and they gave me her phone number on a slip of paper. I immediately called her and asked if I could come home and she said 'yes'. She also told me I had five sisters!” Ginny was overjoyed that she could finally go home and meet the mother she’d never known. She quickly made plans to visit her mother.

Tragically, the January 12 earthquake shattered all those plans. Despite barely surviving herself, as soon as she could, she went to the home address her mother had just given her. To her horror, the address was to a home that was now just a pile of rubble. "Day and night, I worry if my mother is still alive somewhere or if she died in her house. I came so close to meeting her and then this happened! Now, I really feel alone.”

Not knowing how long her mother had been living in Port-au-Prince, she now wonders if their paths had ever crossed over the years. She had no way to recognize her mother and is pained to think her mother may have seen her, but hadn’t recognized her. Further frustrating her is the fact that she has once more lost all contact with her mother. "The piece of paper I had my mom’s phone number on was in my house and it’s collapsed,” said Ginny. "There’s no way I can find the paper now.”

Without any home at all after the earthquake, she made her way to ADRA’s camp for displaced persons that formed in the Carrefour neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince following the earthquake. It was here that ADRA workers discovered her, and now she’s part of ADRA’s child protection and post-trauma program.
ADRA CANADA GLOBAL IMPACT — SPRING 2010

"ADRA is providing food, shelter and psychosocial support to children who are alone, at-risk, and suffering from unimaginable loss," said Patricia Muller, ADRA's Post Trauma project coordinator in Haiti.

For separated or unaccompanied children under age 18 like Ginny, ADRA is providing several services. Child-friendly spaces have been created and a temporary guardian is assigned to each child, with the assistance of community and church leaders, to ensure they have shelter and care in a safe and secure space. They also have access to psychosocial support. Additionally, ADRA is working with the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and other partner agencies who work on family tracing to reunify unaccompanied children with their immediate or extended family members.

Jennifer Morgan, who manages the inter-agency program for UNICEF, says the priority is identifying unaccompanied children and ensuring that they are safe and cared for where they are now, while efforts are made to trace their families.

When people hear of separated or unaccompanied children, they often assume they're orphans and want to quickly begin adoption proceedings. But Morgan warns otherwise. "Children have a right to be with their families. That is why it is so important to allow the reunification process to run its course," said Morgan.

"Plucking children out of their familiar surroundings and depositing them with strangers in strange places not only jeopardizes family reunification efforts, but also causes additional distress and instability," says Morgan. "Even worse, without a structured process of protecting children, they risk falling into the hands of traffickers or other ill-intentioned individuals."

The system works by fostering coordination between the humanitarian partners, in addition to government and community leaders. Since 2005, the jointly-led system has been used in 15 countries, including Indonesia following the tsunami, and in Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis in 2008.

As for Ginny's future: "I just want to live good. I want to go to school and learn a profession because I want to survive," she envisioned.

Ginny has relatives nearly four hours away, but she doesn't know their names. She remains hopeful that through the UNICEF network and the assistance of ADRA she will be soon united with family.

Recently, Ginny met another girl who is in a similar situation. As they sat together they both agreed, "We stick together and look out for each other. We are each other's family. And for the first time, in each other, we have found a sister. We are no longer alone."

Michelle L. Oelman writes from Haiti where she is currently the ADRA Communication & Media Coordinator.

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"How much money does ADRA Canada budget for emergency relief every year?"

ADRA Canada budgets approximately $200,000 per year for emergency relief/disaster response in Canada and around the world. When ADRA Canada participates in an ADRA network disaster response, the money comes from this Emergency Response Fund (ERF). The existence of the ERF facilitates a rapid and efficient response to disasters while providing for future requirements.

When a major disaster such as the 2004 Tsunami, the Myanmar Cyclone or the Haiti Earthquake occurs and supporters provide donations, these funds are not put in the main emergency fund but go immediately to help with the specific disaster. This means that the ERF needs to be replenished throughout the year to ensure enough funds are available for immediate responses. Fortunately, our donors are very supportive and respond generously to our appeals to replenish and augment the ERF.

Disaster is not only earthquake, tsunami, and cyclone, it is also famine, drought, chronic hunger, displacement, and lack of clean water. Last year, ADRA Canada was able to provide clean water to men, women and children in Darfur, Sudan and immediate assistance to the survivors of the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile and the mudslides in Uganda. Because of our generous donors, ADRA Canada received and allocated an additional $300,000 to Haiti earthquake relief.

The second Saturday of May is historically the day when ADRA Canada asks specifically for donations for Disaster and Famine Relief. Most of the funds in the ERF come from this appeal, which makes it possible for us to respond quickly and effectively in times of disaster.
ADRA's RESPONSE TO THE HAITI EARTHQUAKE

On January 12, a powerful 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck the island nation of Haiti. Hundreds of thousands of homes were destroyed, and the death toll has risen to more than 200,000. The ADRA Network responded immediately, taking responsibility for a displaced persons’ camp where we are providing clean water, food, shelter, medical care, and sanitation to more than 15,000. As the primary food distributor for the Carrefour region, ADRA has already provided an estimated 29 million meals.

Memories of an Indonesian Earthquake Survivor

"Finally, I can get the aid that I really need! Thank you so much, ADRA; now we can have a better house. With the zinc roof, we're not afraid anymore of rain, and the plywood can cover the broken wall that was crushed because of the earthquake. I really appreciate what ADRA is doing for my village. Alhamdullilah [All praise and thanks be to Allah]."

—Effendi (a 45-year-old man)

HERE'S A GLIMPSE OF WHAT YOUR GIFT CAN DO.

SRI LANKA: Hundreds of thousands of individuals were forced to flee their homes during the 25-year civil war that ended in May of 2009. ADRA provided clean water, food, shelter, and psychosocial counseling to thousands of displaced children, women, and men.

NAMIBIA: After the worst flooding in decades, ADRA provided clean water and personal hygiene items to 20,000 beneficiaries.

BRAZIL: When severe rains displaced more than 400,000 people in northeastern Brazil, ADRA responded, providing emergency food baskets packed with rice, beans, oil, flour, sugar, salt, and couscous for survivors. ADRA gave priority to those most vulnerable, such as pregnant or lactating women, young children, the elderly, and farmers who lost at least half their crops in the disaster.

SOMALIA: Despite heavy fighting and continuing unrest in Somalia, ADRA continues to bring hope to the displaced people there. Combating outbreaks of cholera and malaria, ADRA distributed jerrycans, basins, soap, towels, and mosquito nets and provided access to clean water and sanitation.
Imagine losing everything—your home, job, family members, and friends—in an earthquake or cyclone. Or imagine having to gather your family and flee your home suddenly because of armed conflict, carrying only what you can run with and not really knowing where you are going, knowing simply that you have to run—now! These are examples of just two of the situations faced by other human beings in our world today. Through funds from its Emergency Response Fund, ADRA Canada brings practical help to individuals faced with these kinds of hardships. We can't do it alone. Your partnership with us is necessary and needed. Your gifts will provide much-needed food, medical assistance, emergency relief, education, and development assistance, especially for the most vulnerable among us: children, women, and the elderly. Will you give a gift today to make a lifesaving difference?

Please accept my gift of:

$__________ for Disaster and Famine Relief

$__________ for Wherever Needed Most

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Wells For Peace

“We don’t fight anymore because we share the water.” The words spoken so softly sound nonchalant, but I know they are the most important words I’ve heard all day. As she speaks through an interpreter, Ayesh sits on the ground under a thatched roof shelter with the women and children in her family who have agreed to talk about their lives and describe the benefits of the ADRA water well located nearby.

Ayesh lives in the West Darfur region of Sudan, approximately three hours north of the capital, El Geneina. My visit is a momentous occasion, and the women in this nomadic family have tidied up their “yard” and are eager to show off their home to the foreign guest. Colourful fabrics line the inner walls and ceiling of the hut and various household necessities are stacked against the walls. It’s a cozy home with everything neatly arranged — everything including two AK-47 rifles on the bed. As my eyes rest on the rifles, I recall Ayesh’s words and I wonder ... in this country of friendly, hospitable people, what does water have to do with peace?

The answer to that question lies in understanding some of the basic challenges faced by the nomads and farmers in West Darfur.

Nomads migrate with their herds of livestock across the country in search of water and grazing land for their animals. Farmers establish permanent homes, plant crops, and build fences to protect those crops. Conflict often arises when the nomads migrate across the farmers’ land and their animals destroy fences, trample and eat crops, and pollute the water supply.

Both sides lose when the farmers use force to protect the crops and water they need for survival and the nomads use rifles to protect their livestock. In extreme cases, farmers have even destroyed their own water pumps in order to keep the nomads away from their villages.

Other factors contributing to the conflict include complex tribal, economic, cultural, religious and political issues that are often misunderstood by Westerners. Sometimes mistrust, jealousy, and hate result when there are insufficient basic resources such as water, food, education, sanitation, and health.

I have worked in at least four countries affected by civil war and have never encountered a community that prefers conflict to peace. But when nobody seems to care about their daily struggle to obtain basic necessities and they can’t envision anything good in the future, people often lose hope.

When hope is gone, it becomes easy to justify violence in order to survive. There is a saying: “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” (Edmund Burke)

ADRA is working with both the nomads and the farmers to develop water resources and provide training in the use of clean water, sanitation, and basic health care. By sharing its resources, ADRA is teaching people in Sudan and other countries to do the same. When I see what has been achieved and the attitudes of the people in the communities in which ADRA works, I am encouraged to continue to support water, sanitation, health, and education projects in the communities that lack these things that we take for granted.

These projects that we view as simple; downplaying the extent of their influence on peace and stability, actually play a key role in building the framework for dialogue that allows people to find their own solutions in a peaceful way. Can a water well bring peace and hope to a community? It certainly can, and I saw the proof of it with my own eyes in West Darfur.

Ronald Kuhn and Elizabeth Homachek had this experience while visiting ADRA Canada water well projects in Darfur, Sudan.

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ADRA Canada World Focus: Conflict and Change

ADRA Canada's second annual World Focus presentations highlighted the challenges of fostering International Development in regions of conflict.

Insightful presentations by Dr. Samantha Nutt, Executive Director of War Child Canada, and Llewellyn Juby, Director of ADRA Sudan, motivated and inspired those in attendance.

As a bonus, Naomi Strieter sang several of her original compositions, including "From Heaven With Love", the song she wrote especially for ADRA Canada.

World Focus: Conflict and Change was presented by ADRA Canada in partnership with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). If you're interested in learning more about how you, as a Canadian, can make a difference in the world through International Development, plan to attend ADRA Canada's next World Focus in March, 2011.

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Facebook

Help ADRA Canada's Cause at www.causes.com/ADRACanada; and become a fan of ADRA Canada's page on Facebook.

AERPLAN

Thank you for donating your Aeroplan miles to ADRA Canada during our recent campaign to "Turn Plastic Into Water for Sudan". Our next Aeroplan Charitable Pooling Program will be throughout the month of February, 2011.

ADRA Canada Cruise

Thank you to all those who made the ADRA Canada 25th Anniversary Cruise a great success! Because of your participation, ADRA Canada received a substantial donation from Grant Morris Cruise and Travel, and Carnival Cruise Lines. (for the Darfur Water Well Project)

If you enjoy cruises, or have been wanting to try one, consider joining the next ADRA Canada cruise/vacation and get the added benefit of helping others while you enjoy a relaxing vacation.

Students!

Submit an original video into ADRA's Amazing Video Contest before May 18, 2010 and you could win a cash prize!

Find all the details online at www.adra.ca/VideoContest