



## NIGERIA

The effect of persecution and violence on children is particularly painful for us here at Open Doors and for our many prayerful supporters.

With heavy hearts we read story after story detailing the violent methods used by militant Islamist group Boko Haram to wipe out entire communities in northern Nigeria. The chaos has led to a major humanitarian crisis. The government's National Emergency Management Agency (MENA) estimates that fighting has displaced 1.5 million people within the country. Among those affected most adversely are children, women and the elderly.

One of our workers met one such group of children during a visit to a refugee camp in Yola, north eastern Nigeria, in November last year. The 16 children had lost both parents during a Boko Haram massacre in Mubi, southern Borno state, the month before. Open Doors researcher, Isaac\*, said he could hardly hold back his tears when he met this small band of children. All in all, local church leaders told us they estimated that around 1000 children had been separated from their parents at the time.

In the most simple of terms, it is not easy to see a group of orphaned children trying to survive in these circumstances. So, recently, Isaac decided to go back to the Yola refugee camp to see how the children were faring.

"The challenges facing these children are numerous," explains Isaac. "They do not know what to do, or (how long) their stay in the camp will continue, or what will become of them once they leave the camp. Unfortunately, the government does not have a formal plan in place to help them yet. But beyond the immediate and longer term concerns over food and shelter, these children also still have a long emotional journey ahead of them as they come to terms with their loss."

Isaac says the Christians in the camp are doing all they can to accommodate the orphans and care for them spiritually. There are daily fellowship gatherings and different speakers visit the camp every Sunday to bring the Word of God to them. By God's grace, Isaac believes the children are "growing spiritually in the midst of these challenges."

Open Doors will soon be providing emergency relief like clothing and bedding to the camp for the children. But in the meantime, Isaac wanted to give them a gift they would be able to carry for a lifetime - their very own children's Bible.

All in all, Isaac was able to personally hand out 100 Bibles during his visit and he prayed for each recipient. Although the assistance we brought felt sorely inadequate, it was very humbling to see the children, who seem to have very little to be cheerful about, respond with such joy and gratitude to our gifts.



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Isaac says it wasn't long before every child had found a place to "sit and page through the beautiful pictures in the Bibles and start reading some of the passages."

"This is a day of joy. This Bible will be my everything," declared Ibrahim, one of the young children who received God's Word. "I remember one day my father told me that the Bible has the answer to all our needs - physical and spiritual. This gift is so precious to me. In a time like this, the Bible is the best companion. I will sleep with it and walk with it until I fully experience God in my life."

In a camp full of so many, with such stories of sadness, it was astonishing and very humbling to hear the responses of children - aged four to 16 - after they received their Bibles. For many, it marked another step on their road to healing.

"I hope this Bible will help me to forgive the killers of my parents," shared Hafsat bravely. "I found it very difficult to get it out of my mind, but I know that there is an answer in this book."

"I want to be like David," decided Jemima after receiving her Bible. "To be very strong - to work for God anywhere I find myself."

"I don't know exactly what to say," explained Maryam. "But in my heart I am so happy. The Lord will bless those who provided this Bible for me."

"Wow, I am so happy to receive a copy of the Bible today," smiled another young boy named Ibrahim. "I have been asking my father to buy one for me when he was alive, but today I got it. I am happy. I will learn how to trust in God through this Word of God. I am so happy."

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## PRAYER and PRAISE POINTS

### OUR 'SHUT INS'

Johanna Boland, Bill Horswell, Elaine Bowey, Peggy Palmer, Keith Davis, Gwen Phillips, Bruce McNally & Val Williams.

#### *Continue to pray for:*

**Morgan Bishop, Elaine Gough and Marie Smith.**

**Carmen Strudwick.** Carmen is free from infection and being moved back to rehab. This is hope that she could be home in a week.

**Maisie Horswell** is in much pain after being diagnosed with a fracture in her spine. Her medication is under review.

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