



My experience 'sharing Loko's burden' (Susan Helen)

After holding these sticks for a few minutes I got a very minor insight into the hard life Loko, a 26-year old Ethiopian mother.

I found it difficult to get these heavy sticks on my back; my upper arms hurt and I needed assistance to take the sticks off my back. I am told that Loko's bundle of wood is about 30kg heavy – mine was barely half that. She also carries that bundle for hours.

Unlike Loko, I have been lucky enough to have eaten three square meals for as long as I can remember and had comfortable footwear for carrying out this arduous task. I also only had to carry the load for no more than ten minutes.

As a woman of similar age to Loko I can only imagine going through the terrifying terrain, full of threat, in search of wood to ensure an income in order to feed a family and keep a home.

I have witnessed the power of Christian Aid first hand when I travelled to Zimbabwe 2014. I understood how even the smallest things can make a huge difference.

One memory that has stuck in my mind is that of a group of struggling women who, after receiving basic training from Christian Aid's local partner, started making clothes to supply their own business that they created as a reliable source of income.

These women had stepped away from unsure futures to a thriving business enabling their children to attend school, build more housing for themselves, generate local business and train other seamstresses.

By supporting Christian Aid we can continue to help people like Loko to leave behind a harsh and uncertain life and help create a promising future.

I too have used what I have learned from Christian Aid to teach my students to be grateful for what they have and to be more considerate and caring for those less fortunate.

Thoughts on linking Zimbabwe:

Upon my return, I spoke to the students' of the Burrow National School, Sutton about vulnerable children in Zimbabwe who attend school through the help of Open School World Wide (one of Christian Aid's local partner).

The students understood that some children had missed out on education due to family circumstances such as: a lack of money to attend school, acting as careers for family members and even working to create an income for their families.

It is an incredible project that has responded to the needs of the community; small groups of children are educated in a local area and at a time that suits them. This programme gives children who would otherwise miss out on education, the opportunity to improve their reading, writing, spelling and basic mathematics.

I felt students had a great interest and understanding full of compassion and empathy for the Zimbabwean children as they were able to relate to children their own age.

