

3 minute Lent talk for SCIAF:

Remember that this is to be read aloud – it is therefore written colloquially, to be spoken, and is not designed to be grammatically correct! Please read it aloud a couple of times and feel free to phrase things in your own way if that makes it feel more real to you. And don't forget – take your time and breathe between the sentences! It will sound very slow to you, but will still probably be quite fast for those listening!

Thank you Father.

Hello everyone. My name's [] and I'm here on behalf of SCIAF.

As you know, SCIAF Sunday is also Mother's Day, so I want to tell you a story about a remarkable young mother from Uganda.

Lydia was only 13 when her parents died, leaving her to take care of her seven siblings. Lydia's not clear what killed her parents but it's likely to have been HIV AIDS.

Lydia's now 26, a single mother, with five children. The two boys are actually her sister's children. When her sister remarried, her new husband refused to take them on – so Lydia did.

She was just 16 at the time.

Lydia went on to have three girls of her own so it made quite a family. And then her husband abandoned them.

Central Uganda, where Lydia lives in a small village, is unbelievably poor and there's almost no employment. As you can imagine, her biggest challenge was feeding her family. She says she struggled to get odd jobs and they lived on one meal a day – and sometimes not even that, going to bed on empty stomachs. And her hut leaked, so when it rained, they slept on the wet floor, as they had no bedding.

But – and here's the good news! – thanks to the love and support shown by parishes like [yours/ours], SCIAF has been able to fund an amazing project in Uganda run by our partner, Caritas Lugazi. Lydia was given seeds and banana plants, and training to help her grow her own food. In the last two years she's not only been able to feed her family, but to sell the extra produce.

She became part of a savings and loan group and has used her extra cash to buy a cow, a pig and a chicken. She now has a mattress and a blanket for the family to share, and she's been able to send the children to school.

Lydia told us – and I find her words incredibly humbling – “I am so thankful. My life has improved. I feel like a human being now.”

Better still, with the profits from her second harvest, Lydia started a mobile hairdressing salon and says it feels great to be a business woman.

Isn't Lydia's an amazing story?

But it's just one of thousands of stories from across the 27 countries where SCIAF supports the poorest of the poor, giving them a hand up. Thousands of people like Lydia have benefitted from your support and SCIAF can't thank you enough.

However, Lydia has also asked us to thank you all for the love, prayers and support you have shown and I think she says it better than I can....

“Before, we had no hope. But now I have seen a great light in the future. I am so thankful to the people of Scotland for the support they are giving us. Thank you so much.”