

SCIAF Lent talk 2020

Thank you Father,

Hello everyone. My name's XXXXXX and I'm here on behalf of SCIAF to thank you for your continued support of SCIAF and to tell you about this year's 'WEE BOX' Lent Appeal.

We are truly thankful to each and every one of you for your support and prayers and very grateful for this opportunity to thank you personally for your generosity over the past year. It is wonderful to be invited into your parish during Lent, but we would love to be a closer part of your parish life throughout the year. I will be at the back of the church after Mass and would be very happy to chat to you more about the WEE BOX appeal or tell you more about how you can support our work.

By now you will hopefully have seen our WEE BOXES in the Parish. This year we are sharing stories of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo who are survivors of violence.

Some of these stories are heart-breaking and distressing to share, but working for a just world is a crucial part of SCIAF's mission and we are desperate to highlight this important issue to the Scottish public.

I'd like to share Angela's story with you. My colleague met her in DR Congo last summer and Angela really wanted you to hear her story. She found the courage to do it as she knew the kind people of Scotland would help.

When Angela was 18 years old she got married. They were deeply in love and saw their whole lives ahead of them. They quickly had four children. Yet one night Angela's life was shattered.

Their home was attacked by rebels, her husband was shot dead, and Angela was attacked by nine men. As a result of this Angela is now HIV Positive.

The attack left Angela with many mental and physical scars. Today, five long years after the attack, Angela is still not able to live in peace. She said,

“Even in the community I am not at ease. I am stigmatised, and so are my children. The children feel insecure and sometimes refuse to eat. If they hear a loud bang they start trembling. Other children don't play with my children in case they contaminate them.”

As an outcast in her own community, life is extremely hard. But through SCIAF's local partner, Angela received medical care and trauma counselling to help her

recover from her attack. Angela also received a loan to start a small business which helped her situation, though it's still a real struggle for her to support her children on her own.

“When I started my business I could earn enough to get by, but now many people are also selling doughnuts and now I only make £1.50 a day. It's not enough. I don't know how the children will go to school now.”

Tragically, Angela's story is a common one. While her wounds may have healed, the scars run deep. Angela, and many others like her, desperately need your help.

This Lent you can help women like Angela to get the help they need. Over the next three years we will help 4,000 women affected by gender-based violence in the DR Congo to get the support they need to recover and start rebuilding their lives. This help includes healthcare, surgery and trauma counselling, as well as legal support to prosecute their attackers, plus help to become financially independent so they can stand on their own two feet again.

We are delighted to tell you that this year your gifts will be matched so that £1 = £2. Until 20th May, all gifts to our WEE BOX BIG CHANGE appeal will be doubled by the UK government.

Please support the WEE BOX appeal during this holy season and in **today's** special collection. Your gifts will help SCIAF's life changing work around the world, while match funding from the UK government will transform the lives of extremely vulnerable women affected by gender-based violence in the DR Congo.

Everything you give will make a big difference.

- Just £15 will pay for one child to receive a birth certificate. Without it the child cannot go to a doctor or go to school
- Or £15 a month can pay for 3 women who have been attacked to have medical and surgical help for a year.

Together we can help women of the DR Congo to stand on their own two feet again.

Please remember families in the DR Congo in your prayers this Lent, in particular the thousands of women and girls who have suffered violence. Thank you for reaching out with love and compassion to people in need around the world.

As I said, I will be at the back of the church after Mass and would be very happy to chat to you more about the WEE BOX appeal or tell you more about how you can support our work.

I'll leave you with a few words from Fr Justin, one of our partners in DR Congo.

“The people of Scotland are the people that we should congratulate. They have helped us a lot through SCIAF. We thank them in the name of all those we help”.

Thank you and God bless.