

# HANDS ON DECK



## CONTRIBUTORS

in this issue of Hands on Deck

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Never Phiri  
Agnes Mokoena  
Angel Mbolela  
Erick Rukang

*“But now, this is what the Lord says – he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.’”*  
- Isaiah 43:1-2



On their way to find Ruth



Ruth back at the Care Point

*“Sometimes we need to be radical when it comes to fighting for our children, we need to take a stand.” – Farai Gunhe*

## TAKING A STAND

Farai Gunhe, African Volunteer (Zimbabwe), Zimbabwe Regional Support Team Leader

“When we talk of fighting for the lost one, this is what it means. Throughout the lockdown, we have seen courageous men and woman standing up for our children. Sometimes we need to be radical when it comes to fighting for our children, we need to take a stand.”

Across Africa, Hands at Work has seen a sharp increase in childhood marriage due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as families are desperate to have some sense of financial security. Zimbabwe is no exception.

When Farai and the Honde Valley Service Centre heard that Ruth, a young girl from Pimai C Community had been forced into an

early marriage by her mother, they sprang into action.

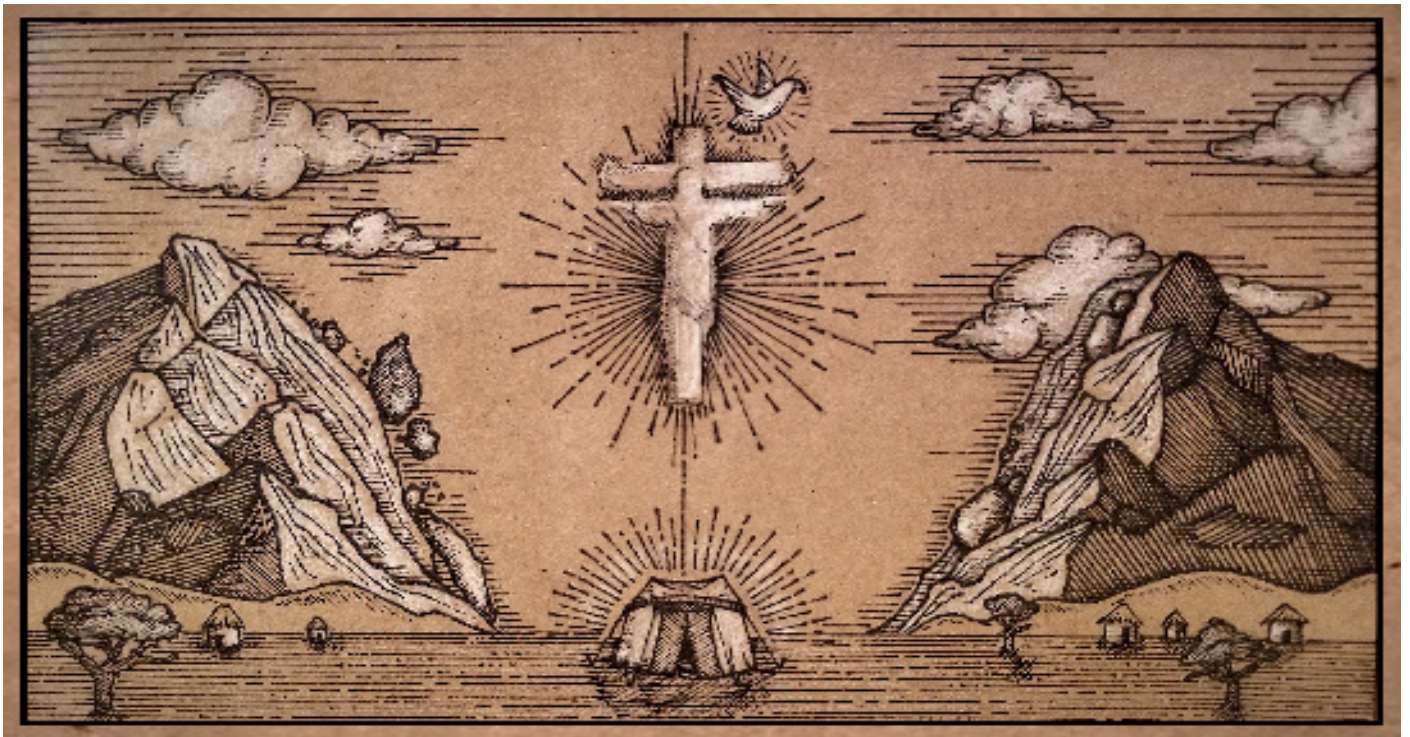
Understanding that early marriage is deeply rooted in the culture, they knew that they would face opposition in their fight to bring Ruth home.

The team faced many difficult conversations with Ruth’s family who initially tried to mislead them and keep Ruth in the marriage. After a day of searching, questioning and pleading for Ruth’s whereabouts, the family, realising that Farai and the team weren’t going to give up, brought Ruth to her school where Farai and the team could meet with them all.

Ruth is no longer in the marriage, but her journey to healing has only just begun. The trauma that she has endured will likely have a long-lasting impact on her life, but Farai

and her Care Workers are dedicated to helping her find healing and access to the services needed to do so.

They are also committed to walking with her mother, helping her to understand the dangers of early marriage, and the benefits of consistent Christ-centred care. This is what it means to take a stand, and fight for the lost one.



## 2021 WATCHWORD REFLECTIONS

Never Phiri, African Volunteer (South Africa), Maintenance Team  
Agnes Mokoena, African Volunteer (South Africa), Hospitality Team

The 2021 watchword from Isaiah 54:10 says “‘Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,’” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.’

Never says, “The watchword came at a time when my mind was everywhere. I was having some struggles in my personal life which were filling my mind and heart with anger and scorn. When I heard the word ‘shaken’ in the watchword, it made me think about the shaking that was happening within my own family. Then I heard that God’s peace is always available, no matter the shaking. I realised that in the ‘heat of the moment’ I am not always full of peace, I forget it very easily. But God’s peace is not like that – it is always available and always present. I realised that because of this amazing gift, I can know peace, even though the shaking is happening.”

Agness shares, “2020 was not an easy year for me as I was sick and experienced lots of pain. It was a time when I wondered why I was feeling so alone and abandoned. I wondered why my body was struggling so much. I felt discouraged. But when I heard the watchword, I knew that God was speaking to me. The watchword reminds me of the unfailing love of our Father. I can face many challenges – the mountains being shaken – but there is no need for me to be afraid. He is my redeemer, and He won’t disappoint me.”

*“The watchword reminds me of the unfailing love of our Father. I can face many challenges – the mountains being shaken – but there is no need for me to be afraid. He is my redeemer, and He won’t disappoint me.” - Agnes Mokoena*

## WHO ARE YOU ENCOURAGING?

Angel Mbolela, African Volunteer (DRC), Likasi Service Centre Co-ordinator

Erick Rukang, African Volunteer (DRC), Likasi Service Centre Co-ordinator



What does it mean to encourage one another and stand with our brothers and sisters in prayer?

Angel shares, "The watchword for 2021 reminds us that we shouldn't live in fear, no matter what happens. Even our travel from the Congo to Zambia, was filled with challenges. Thankfully, God allowed our COVID results to be negative and so we were able to travel to the border. Just near the border, we found that there was some fighting happening, where people were burning tyres and throwing stones, while the road was blocked. We tried going different ways, but people kept trying to throw things at the car. We continued going at our own risk, until one motorbike driver saw us and asked where we were going. He then told us to follow him. That guy on the motorbike was our angel. We don't know where he came from, but we knew that God had sent him. He was driving fast and the way we went, I couldn't tell you where we were driving. After a long way, we reached the border and we were able to cross. It was a miracle from God.

As we were facing those challenges, Erick was in communication with team in Zambia. We kept receiving messages of encouragement and prayer. As we were facing challenges, those messages kept bringing strength. We felt like we weren't alone. From those prayers, God really revealed himself to us. That's why we need to encourage each other in any challenges we are facing. They are important. No matter what the barriers or obstacles are, we need to push because this is the calling that we have received from God."

Erick adds, "Even in the midst of the stones being thrown, I felt God saying 'just go'. I don't understand how the stones didn't damage our car. The question I can ask is, who are you encouraging? When we encourage someone, we don't know the impact that it will have."

## PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Pray for the watchword from Isaiah 54:10 to sink deep into the hearts of each Hands at Work volunteer in Africa and around the world.

Coming into 2021, there has been a shifting of roles for several volunteers in Africa. Pray for each person who is starting a new role this year, that they will develop a deep understanding of what they are stepping into. In whatever role, whether in the office or out in the community, pray that people stay connected to what is happening in the lives of our children.

Across Africa, we need to pray for the harvests, especially in countries like Mozambique and Eswatini, where there has been rain in excess. Pray that the harvests will still be plentiful despite the large amounts of rain that could kill the crops.

Pray for each Care Worker, child, Primary Caregiver, and Hands at Work volunteer to remain safe and healthy.

In many communities across Africa, fear of the pandemic remains a source of anxiety for our Care Workers, children and Primary Caregivers. Pray for the peace of God to reign in their hearts. Pray that they will not give into fear, but that they will stand strong on God's truth that He will never leave nor forsake them.