

Christian Aid Week 2024

Group Resource

Introduction for the group leader

This Christian Aid Week group has activities and questions designed to get your group thinking, reflecting and talking together. If you think your group might find this approach unusual, you may want to prepare them by telling them in advance that your time together will include questions and invite conversations.

We hope this resource will be inclusive and engaging. With this in mind, we invite you to use accessible language whenever possible so everyone can engage with the conversations and learning. If you can, you may also want to consider how to make talking in groups easy and comfortable within the physical space you have available.

The big questions at the heart of this resource are:

- What does it look like to put love into action?
- How can we be a community rooted in love?

Welcome

Welcome your group and remind them that everyone is welcome before God. Whether they're young or old. Whether they're full of imagination or full of wisdom. Whether they feel shy or are brimming with confidence. Whether it's their first time in the group or their hundredth! Everyone is welcome.

Remind your group that there'll be questions to reflect on and opportunities to talk and listen to one another. Contributions from everyone will be encouraged and welcomed. All will have ideas and reflections worth sharing.

Highlight that this week's group meeting is part of your celebration of Christian Aid Week. You may want to ask how many people have heard of Christian Aid, and whether they know what Christian Aid does.

Christian Aid is a charity that works around the world with communities who don't have the basic things they need to live full lives, free from poverty. Such as communities who don't have safe homes or reliable supplies of food or water. Communities where the climate crisis has destroyed crops, or where families can't afford to send their children to school. Christian Aid works in partnership with local communities who are living in extreme poverty to support them as they work to overcome daily challenges and build better futures.



Christian Aid does this because of the core values of LOVE, DIGNITY, EQUALITY, INTEGRITY and JUSTICE that are part of their Christian foundations.

Story

Let everyone know that you'll be reading them a story, but to not get too comfortable because there'll be asked to pause and reflect together in groups at certain points.

Today we're privileged to share Aline [pronounced AHH-leen] Nibogora's story. While this story can help us to understand Aline's experiences and the challenges she's faced, we must remember that Aline and her wider community are bigger than this story. We could never hope to retell the full complexity of anyone's life, nor should we, but by sharing Aline's story today, we can gain an insight into the work and impact of Christian Aid and their partners.

Slide 1 – [Photo of Aline]. We'll be hearing and reflecting on Aline's story so we can learn a little bit more about the work of Christian Aid.

Slide 2 – [Unmarked satellite view over central Africa]. Aline is from Burundi. Does anyone know roughly where Burundi is?

Slide 3 – [Marked satellite view over central Africa]. Burundi is in central Africa. It's a very mountainous country. Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world.

Many people live in poverty, and most rely on farming to provide food to both eat and sell. Christian Aid has three local partners in Burundi that have vital local knowledge, understanding of the community, and specialist knowledge. Christian Aid supports and invests in local partners who are then able to deliver even more life changing support.

Slide 4 – [Photo of Aline farming]. Families in Burundi grow fruit and vegetables such as bananas, sweet potatoes and beans, plus sugarcane, tea and coffee. Farming is hard work, but it's being made even harder because Burundi, like many places, is being affected by the climate crisis, which is increasing global temperatures and changing weather patterns across the world. Many farmers see their crops failing due to extreme weather events such as droughts and floods.

Families face many other challenges as well. Just like in the UK, the cost of everyday essential items is going up. In Burundi, most families don't have a water supply to their home, so they must collect water from rivers or shared water points. Healthcare is very expensive, and you often have to travel a long way to see a doctor or nurse.

The challenges that communities like Aline's face are made even harder as the climate crisis get worse. It's a heart-breaking reality that the crisis is having the most severe impact in places like Burundi where life was already challenging enough. Furthermore, the people of Burundi are among those who've done the least to cause the climate crisis in the first place.



Slide 5

Questions for Group Discussion

- How do you think people in Burundi, like Aline, feel when despite their hard work, the crops that they're growing to make a living and feed their families fail?
- Have you ever experienced something similar? How did it leave you feeling?

Give the groups five minutes to share their thoughts and take a couple of minutes to have feedback from the groups.

Slide 6 – [Photo of Aline loading produce onto her bike from her home]. Life in Burundi is tough, but Aline had an especially difficult life - married young to a man who was violent. At one time she didn't even have a place to live. Alone, hungry and with nowhere safe to go, she was very vulnerable. Aline lost so much, but she didn't lose hope.

Determined and resilient, Aline found support through Christian Aid's partners in her community. Aline received training that meant she had the skills and knowledge to set up a small business and form a Village Savings and Loans Association with other local people. Aline and her neighbours contributed money to a shared pot that became available as loans for members, as and when they needed them. Aline took a small loan to set up her own business selling peanuts and avocados. Through her business, Aline has been able to buy a bike, build her own home, get better access to healthcare, and educate her family.

Slide 7 – [Photo of Aline holding a brick]. Aline hasn't stopped there though. She's now the chairperson of a Village Savings and Loans Association that she's founded. Aline's using her experience to help transform the lives of other families who want to do the same and build a brighter future together. Now, when crops fail, storms damage homes, and people fall ill, this community is in a position to work together to overcome these challenges.

Slide 8 – [Aline quote]. Aline told us: 'The training helped me to get started, and today I still have it in my heart and mind. I intend to pass it on to my children and other groups like ours. It's important that we give back and train those who didn't have this opportunity, for the development of our community and our country.' 'The members thank me for the training and the positive impact it has had on their daily lives. People come to me as they trust me. Here in Burundi, a neighbour is considered a member of the family.'



Slide 9

Questions for Discussion

- How has Aline's life been transformed?
- Have you ever experienced a transformation like this in your own life?
- What does it look like to put love into action in our community?

Give the groups ten minutes to share their thoughts and take a couple of minutes to have feedback from the groups.

Prayer Activity

In Aline's story, we saw how she's been building a home for her family, and building a stronger community through her hard work, dedication and love. She's been putting love into action. In response to the exploration of love in action, we invite you to build a 'prayer wall'.

Using paper (landscape), invite your group to write prayers that respond to Aline's story and the conversations they've just had. Once these are complete stick the collection on a wall or display board like bricks, and take time to pray through them together.

