



September 2011

## Stories of hope

In Libya the current situation is tense, the future uncertain. Questions have been raised about the nation's stability with the surely inevitable end of Colonel Gaddafi as Libyan leader. So much depends on the next few days and weeks, and how the transition is handled by the interim government, the National Transitional Council (NTC), who are overseeing the running of the country during this period of change.

Understandably there are concerns that this situation, which could lead to a leadership vacuum, may escalate into civil unrest, violence, disruption and economic hardships for ordinary citizens. In the last few months alone, many of these concerns have been realised in other countries in the Arab world.

While the situation and future of Libya is uncertain, we know that aid agencies have a massive part to play in safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of ordinary citizens. Their timely help and support can mean the difference between living with dignity and independence, and desperately trying to survive, having to rely on friends' and neighbours' charity. Our partners in Egypt have seen first-hand what a difference their support can make.

In the aftermath of the Egyptian Revolution, we have heard story after story of people who felt helpless and desperate, with their subsequent loss of income and financial stability, who have been helped by the love and practical care of our partners. From the Diocese of Egypt, a BibleLands partner, here are just a few of those stories:

*My name is Fatma. I live in Ain Shams (a part of Cairo). My husband was working day to day as a construction worker. After the Revolution nobody called for his work. We waited the first week, then the second week, but nobody called him so we had no income. I started to ask my neighbours for food for my son. Luckily the staff in Ain Shams Community Development Centre (a centre run by the Diocese of Egypt) invited me to get a weekly food package. I felt happy but it wasn't a permanent solution and it wasn't enough for us. My husband kept trying to find work but he couldn't – three months passed and he had no work. He started to get very angry and nervous because he couldn't support us, and we were building a lot of debts.*

*I went to the centre and asked the staff for a loan to buy a wooden cart and donkey to sell vegetables with my husband and to earn our living together. The staff liked my idea and helped me to buy the cart and also the goods. Now my husband and I go out every day to sell the goods, and we return with enough money for us and for our son. My husband has gained more confidence and dreams of opening a small shop to avoid*

walking in the sun all day and to be able to have a larger supply of goods. He is happy because he has work, and I can support him and help him to make his dream come true.

*My name is Hewauda, I live in Ain Shams. I was married and have four children. My husband was doing day to day work, but after the Revolution he lost his job and was not able to support the family anymore. He was very distressed and started to behave badly towards me and our children. He felt that we were a burden for him because of our needs. He didn't feel we were his responsibility so he left us. I felt very helpless and sad; I cried a lot for my children. I tried to find my husband with no luck. I found myself responsible for four children. I was at a loss when I decided to unburden my heart to the staff at Ain Shams Community Development Centre. I felt very welcomed so I asked the centre for a loan to earn my living and safeguard my children.*

*They helped me to start my own business reselling plastic packaging. Now I have a small income and hope for the future; I thank God for that.*

*My dream is to be able to keep supporting my family, helping my children to stay in school and supporting them to complete their education.*

*My name is Saed. I live in Madent El Salam. I am 24 years old. I finished high school and started to work in different areas, but my salary was very low. I was working in a very small workshop but after the Revolution they said that they didn't have any clients so they did not need me to work for them anymore.*

*I felt very sad and disappointed. I spent all my time at home and felt very lonely. But then God started to work with me and things changed. The staff at Medinet Salam Community Development Centre (a centre run by the Diocese of Egypt) invited me to attend a seminar focusing on income generating projects. I went and I really enjoyed the seminar. They told us how it is possible to earn your living by starting your own business. This gave me hope and I really wanted to start working again.*

*I decided to ask the centre to give me a loan to start an income generating project. They liked my business idea and encouraged me, helping me do a feasibility study to establish a small mobile accessories shop with computers and a photocopy machine. In the shop I help my customers with transferring ring tones for young people's mobile phones, and people can come and buy time on the computer or make photocopies of documents.*

*I got the loan from the centre and paid it as a deposit for all the equipment. I got everything I needed and started my project, now I get a good income and I can pay for the machinery and live a decent life. I have a dream of one day being able to have a big mobile shop. I have two employees assisting me at work which gives me more confidence and a feeling of success.*

These stories are just a selection of the many that we receive, and they demonstrate what a profound difference Christian organisations can make to people's lives. When everything seems hopeless, support, acceptance and practical help can change the lives of individuals and whole families, bringing dignity and hope for the future.

---

Our partners in the Middle East are continuing to reach out to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in society, and Bible*Lands* are proud to be involved in this work. If you'd like to find out more, visit the About Us section of our website ([www.biblelands.org.uk](http://www.biblelands.org.uk)). If you would like to donate to our work (either a one-off or a regular gift) you can donate online or by calling **01494 897950**. Thank you!