



Story: Justice for people marginalised by disability – a story from our global Methodist community

Across the world, people with disabilities are often treated unfairly and can find it hard to challenge the injustice they face. In some societies, disability is taboo: people who are disabled find themselves pushed to the edge of their communities, and even of their families.

The Methodist Church in Tanzania is working to change this, with the support of the World Mission Fund. The Tanzanian Church is passionate about coming alongside people who are disabled and forgotten by society.

The Church works to change whole communities' attitudes towards disability. It offers training to build up skills for people who are disabled so they can fend for themselves; and to encourage their families and communities to think differently about them, and all people who live with disabilities.

Two people who have been helped are Mariam and Pascal.

Mariam has an impairment that stops her from saying even simple phrases easily – so people didn't talk to her. She had few friends, and was left out of community life. She could not find work and struggled to take care of her child.

However, with the help of the Tanzanian Church, Mariam has set up a business making charcoal, which gives her an income. This means Mariam can feed her child, and herself. She is accepted in her community: people's attitudes to Mariam are different – she's one of them now, and people warmly welcome her at church to join in worship.

Pascal has difficulty walking due to diabetes affecting the nerves in his feet. So at middle age – when he expected to be a respected member of his community – Pascal

found himself excluded from normal activities. He had little food, and barely managed to keep his water supply topped up. That's not fair. But with the church's support, Pascal's life has changed. Today, he has a flourishing poultry farm, with chickens and eggs to feed himself and sell to others.

As the Church brings change to the lives of people like Mariam and Pascal, justice ripples out for more people with disabilities across the wider community. People who were living on the edge, are now self-sufficient. They have a new sense of dignity. Attitudes change, people are accepted, opportunities created and community extended.

Like Mariam and Pascal, Elizabeth is disabled and suffered injustice because of that. But she, too, has received help from the Church, and what a difference that has made! She says: "The support has really helped me and I thank God that the Church has remembered me. Before, there was nothing I could do, but now I am contributing to the community and am respected by people."