

CENTRAL AFRICA: “IRI TI MBI LOUISE” – “THEY CALL ME LOUISE”



For International Women’s Day, ATD invites people also to stop and listen to women who live in extreme poverty. They defend human rights and struggle against injustice in so many ways around the world. They speak up in support of their communities to benefit other women like them who live in extreme poverty. They speak out to call for a world in which this poverty no longer exists.

Louise is an activist member of ATD Fourth World in the Central African Republic. Here, she introduces herself by speaking about her dialogue with a neighbour.

“If we do not seek out those in the most extreme state of poverty, then they will be forgotten.

“When the Central African Republic was invaded in 2003, the armed militia caused major harm to the population. Two of my neighbours ran away to hide in the forest. One of them went with her grandson. Sometimes she would send the boy to the village to buy necessities, but she would stay in the forest and did not want to go to the village, even after the soldiers left. My neighbour said that in the forest there were no problems, while in the village people accused her of wanting to cause harm to others. So she preferred to stay in the forest.

"I said to her, 'Staying in the forest works for you — but what about for the child? Shouldn't you think about his future?'

"Today marks four months since the woman heeded my counsel and returned to the village.

"The day before yesterday, we were in the fields and she told me, 'If something happens to me, I will blame you!'

"However, if we do not seek out those in the most extreme state of poverty, then they will be forgotten. I have taken risks because of what I learned with ATD Fourth World

"There are many things we see, and many that we do not. Unless we approach people to find out what they have in their hearts, we can never fully understand their reality."