

## FLORENT FROM BURKINA FASO



**“Being a volunteer means carrying within oneself the challenges faced by people in poverty.”**

I know that when we approach them, all young people living on the street find courage and hope that helps them to brave life. We show them that their family is important, in helping them find a way forward. Now I no longer worry about accompanying a young person whose advance is slow. We are not the solution to their problems. These young people need the freedom to find their own answers. We are proud and feel encouraged when R comes to the Courtyard of a Hundred Trades to tell us: “I am now working to help my father because he can no longer work, I am building my house.” We see that he has found a way forward.

**Helping others means supporting their efforts, and together bringing out the best in them.**

I used to wonder about M, who was raising her children in front of the mosque where she

would sit with them to beg. I asked myself if she really cared about their future. But by getting to know her, I learned to see M's efforts differently. I understood her motherly qualities, her concern at the well-being of her own children as well as the children of her community.

Being a Fourth World Volunteer Corps member means making time to help others. Helping others means supporting their efforts, and together bringing out the best in them. Being a volunteer can even mean forgetting your own family and friends when you find people who need you even more.

Being a volunteer means carrying within oneself the challenges faced by people in poverty. It means denouncing the violence against people who are excluded. And it means trumpeting the efforts these people make.

This is also a lesson in life as one learns to live for oneself and for others. It is a way of living, a choice, a freedom.

One village elder said that peace for one person is no peace at all; it is only when everyone has peace that there is real peace. To experience this, I had to rid myself of the misunderstandings of those around me. People do not understand that my goal is not to earn money.

Giving your time to others is freedom; it is not a deprivation of liberty, because you feel useful. With the other person, you find hope because a human being without hope is doomed. So choosing this commitment is freedom because we have made the choice of our own free will. When you find hope with others, you understand what freedom means. It even happens that when we are thinking of the problems of those to whom we have made a commitment, we end up in tears ourselves because their lives have almost become ours.

**I have learned one great lesson: to see other people only through their qualities. Each person has their strengths, despite all our differences. And believing in the other's positive qualities makes us better people. It makes the other person strive to live up to their best qualities; and by believing in the other, each of us becomes our better self too.**

— Florent, full-time member of ATD Fourth World's Volunteer Corps, Burkina Faso