



Sarata's story, from Centre de la Réconciliation Lille

(please be aware this includes adult content)

Sarata was an unaccompanied minor who arrived in France in September 2015, not knowing how to read, write or speak French. She committed herself to learn all three, then in March 2016, she was allowed to join a junior school (the equivalent of UK Year 3). An immense challenge, which she overcame!

During the following two years, 2016 – 2018, she achieved a CAP (Professional Aptitude Certificate [probably NVQ equivalent]) in catering, coming amongst the top of the class. In much demand during her placements, she has been working in a business since the summer of 2018.

If Sarata hadn't been taken in by the church and its social outreach at the start, housed and schooled, or allowed to share a flat with some students for free, encouraged along the way by numerous people, we don't dare imagine what might have happened to her.

The interview below is made up from several interviews she has given on different occasions.

Hello Sarata, can you tell us a little of your background? My name is Sarata, I come from Conakry in Guinea. My father has several wives and 24 children. My mother had 6 children. I was exorcised at the age of 6, but it didn't go well.

My eldest sister committed suicide following her arranged marriage. She was 15. She was the third wife of her husband and had a daughter in 2011. Not able to bear her fellow wives and afraid of her father's anger if she returned home, she killed herself when her daughter was five months old.

How did you end up in France and with whom? At the age of 14, I started a friendship with a 17-year-old Christian. He talked to me about the Bible and other school topics, because I wasn't allowed to go to school. My father didn't approve of our friendship, especially because my friend was a Christian. To punish me, Father arranged a marriage for me with one of his elderly friends who already had three wives. I was 16. Fortunately, he didn't consummate the marriage because it was Ramadan. I escaped before Ramadan ended!

I met a man who listened to my story and offered to take me far away on one of his journeys. I didn't ask for any details, because I trusted him! On 10 September 2015 I arrived in France. I was 16 years and 9 months old. It was then that he raped me for 5 days. I begged him to let me go but he told me the police were going to catch me and hurt me. I was very ill, didn't stop bleeding because of the rapes and the mutilation. The man became scared. We took the train and he abandoned me in Lille.

That is a very difficult background for a minor. How did you cope? It was very complicated for me because the man who brought me here kept my papers. At the beginning I went to the authorities, but was told they couldn't house me because I had no papers. I found myself at the Church.

Which church? The Centre de la Réconciliation. I arrived there on 1 November 2015. I was there for a month and a half before the pastor found me a flat share. I managed to get my passport and my recognised "minor status" just before I became an adult!

Did you go to school? I never went to school in my own country, never. Once I came to France, I learned to read and write and to speak French.

You must be very intelligent. Lots of people say, “Sarata you are so strong”, but it’s not me, it’s a miracle that has happened in my life. The miracle is God, he performs miracles in my life. It’s not because I am strong. It’s the Lord who did it, and continues to do miracles in my life. When I arrived, I’d had a problem with my head, which I’d had since childhood. The pastor helped me tend to that. He didn’t tend to it with medication but with prayer.

So you’ve had an education. What are your plans? I never ever thought that one day I’d go to school. Firstly, I was in the junior school, then the grammar school at Tourcoing and I loved it. I did my catering qualifications. My plan is to stay in France. My mother died in December 2015 and so I’m an orphan. All of this is a miracle, because for a young girl of my age who finds herself alone with no parents, it’s complicated, but God always helps me to make it through. Now I’m working in catering.



An update on COP15 from A Rocha International

As mentioned in our December newsletter, the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity, [COP15](#), ran from 7-19 December in Montreal, Canada. Before COP15, the [A Rocha Policy Statement CPD COP15](#) outlined their

position on tackling biodiversity loss, climate change and global injustice together. *A Rocha explains the outcome of COP15 here:*

After weeks of intensive talks in Montreal, the long-awaited Post-2020 Global Diversity Framework (GBF) was successfully adopted at COP15. This framework aims to reverse nature loss by 2030, providing a global blueprint similar to the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C climate goal.

The GBF targets fulfil four global goals for 2050, which seek to:

- Preserve and restore ecosystems and halt human induced extinction of known threatened species.
- Sustainably use biodiversity.
- Fairly and equitably share the benefits of genetic resources.
- Ensure adequate means of implementing these goals for all parties.

Positive highlights from the GBF targets for 2030 include:

- Scale up the conservation of species, the preservation of remaining intact ecosystems and the large-scale restoration of what has already been depleted. This mandates action to halt extinctions of known threatened species (and a tenfold reduction of extinction risk of all species by 2050).
- Protect 30% of Earth’s lands, oceans, coastal areas, and inland waters, with emphasis on areas of particular importance for biodiversity. Indigenous and traditional territories and practices are to be recognised.
- Reduce harmful government subsidies that destroy biodiversity by at least \$500 billion.
- Increase biodiversity finance by at least \$200 billion.



- Reduce to near zero the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance, including ecosystems of high ecological integrity.
- Cut global food waste in half.
- Secure at least \$200 billion per year in domestic and international biodiversity finance from all sources – public and private.
- Take effective measures to ensure international sharing of benefits that arise from the use of genetic sequence information.
- Reduce the risk posed by pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals by half.

For Christians, the basis for caring for the Earth runs much deeper than the imminent crisis facing us. Our first motivation is based on God's concern for life on earth in all its variety. This concern is woven into the central themes of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Biodiversity is also at the heart of God's plan for redemption and renewal.

Despite a clear and comprehensive focus on God's love for all that He has made, Christians have historically been quiet on the imperative to care for nature. Given that Christianity has so many adherents, strong commitment from Christians for the recovery of nature across the world could greatly help in bringing about the enormous changes and improvements that are needed. A Rocha celebrates the outcome of COP15 alongside partners in the World Evangelical Alliance Creation Care Network.



Prayer requests from mission partner Jenny for forthcoming events



31 Jan – 3 Feb I will be attending the **World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) [Mission Commission Global Consultation](#)** in Chiang Mai, Thailand. This global leaders gathering will consider the future of mission and there will be a virtual prayer team covering the meetings. Please pray for wisdom, insight and fruitful discussions.

31 Jan – 4 Feb Please pray for the **Africa Prayer Council** in Nigeria. I have been involved with this through the International Prayer Council and hope to see collaboration and partnership across a wide number of networks, including those of us in the Ethne prayer team. Visas and Flights are still needed to be confirmed for some key delegates.

6-10 February - Please pray for the **Ethne Facilitation Team meeting** in Thailand as we make decisions about this year's global **[Ethne](#)** gathering in Southeast Asia in November.

13-18 February - 24:14 Movement leaders gathering - a key strategic moment for sharing information, strategies and research. I will be attending as coordinator of the **[24:14](#)** Prayer Task Force. We will be interviewing some of the 100 church planting movement leaders who are planning to attend, about prayer in movements.



More generally, for [110 Cities](#), whose vision is to see the 110 most unreached cities in the world reached with the Gospel, January is the month of Global focus on the Buddhist World. This is an answer to our prayers as I have been involved for many years in the mobilisation of prayer for those living in the Buddhist world. In particular, on **21** and **22 January** I will be involved in 24 hours of prayer on the Global Day of Prayer for the Buddhist world. More information can be found here <https://www.110cities.com/chinese-new-year>. Please do have a look at these [Prayer guides for the Buddhist world](#).



Stop Press! We have just received a prayer request from Penny and Juan Carlos Marcés in Peru. Last month they reported that the President had been impeached, and a new one appointed. This has caused national unrest – for full story see [Marcés update Jan 2023](#)



For information about any of the above, please contact **St Paul's World Church Team:** Carlton Beasley, Annabel Blanch, Sally Hulbert, Jonathan Papworth, Elizabeth Shaw and Sue Swain-Fossey worldchurch@stpaulsdorking.org.uk More information about our Mission Partners: [Dave Bookless A Rocha, Centre de la Réconciliation - Lille; New Hope Children's Centre - Kenya; Jenny and Stuart O; Oasis, Mumbai - India; Open Doors - Syria; Penny and Juan Carlos Marcés - Peru](#)