

Seeing child I sponsor inspired me to do more

IT was seeing the difference that sponsoring a child could make that inspired Sue Tinney to become an ambassador for World Vision.

She had the privilege of meeting Laurent, the Senegalese boy she sponsored, when she visited the country in 2013. The visit made a profound impression on her.

"What struck me was how basic it all was," she said. "They had no TV, no running water, no electricity, and a harsh climate, and yet they were so happy with what they did have, and so grateful for World Vision's support. It was a very humbling experience."

Sue, who has worshipped at our cathedral for 12 years, now talks about the work of World Vision to church and community groups, and has represented the charity at events in the House of Commons. She is planning a return to Senegal this month.

She grew up going to church and Sunday School in London and was confirmed by the Bishop of Southwark. She spent a few years working in West Africa, and moved to Hampshire, working as a teacher. Sue and her husband Sam set up a training business after he took early retirement from IBM to help people return to work, and she also worked in local government before she retired.

The couple first became involved with World Vision when they heard an advert on the radio for the charity in 2004. They were inspired to sponsor a girl in India. Three years later, they started sponsoring Laurent in Senegal.

"We were impressed with World Vision, with their Christian ethics, the fact that they work with local communities, and that they

stay working with them for the long-term to help them become self-sufficient," said Sue.

"They don't launch projects to convert people to Christianity but to implement God's work by helping those less fortunate than ourselves. World Vision want to empower people in developing countries to help themselves, for example, to expand educational opportunities for all, improve health care by setting up health centres, and provide other benefits for the local community.

"The first two or three years of a project are spent in building relationships and partnerships with community leaders to find out what is important to them. World Vision helps them to achieve these over a period of between 10 to 15 years."

The couple started sponsoring Laurent in 2007, and it was a real privilege to be asked to visit his

"They couldn't stop shaking our hands, they were dancing, hugging us and singing to show their appreciation. There is a real sense of community there, which I think we've lost here. Granny helps to look after the children while mum goes to the market garden or dad is herding cattle.

"They are so thankful for the projects that have been completed with World Vision's support, especially the new classrooms that have replaced those made of leaves and tree branches and given the children better opportunities for learning.

"We watched the children carry their desks from the old classrooms to the new ones, and they have such a sense of pride. The project also gave the school new, separate toilets for girls, which enables them to have an unbroken education, as many drop out of school when they reach

my faith

Sue Tinney was inspired to become an ambassador for World Vision after meeting the child she sponsors in Senegal. Now she speaks in churches across our area about the charity

village in April 2013, with five other sponsors and three World Vision staff. It gave Sue a chance to see the healthcare, education and food security projects that World Vision are involved with.

"I couldn't quite believe I was there," she said. "It was very emotional, as we had been building our relationship through correspondence. Of course, our money doesn't go to Laurent – he is the community representative. It is given to the whole village and they make decisions about where it is spent. Our money went on mosquito nets, new classrooms and a vaccination programme.

puberty – I hadn't thought of that.

"I was in tears when I got home. It took me a while to adjust, because they have a simple, meaningful life, and I'm thankful for the opportunity to help them. Our support for Laurent will continue until he leaves full-time education."

Sue was asked by World Vision in 2012 to become an ambassador for the charity, speaking about its work at various local events.

"My first talk was to a Townswomen's Guild, and I was terrified," she said. "But it got such a good response that I thought 'I can do this!'. When I go



Sue Tinney with Laurent and the gift of peanuts he gave to her

out I often feel that I can't do it, but something gives me strength. God gives me the strength to do it.

"Laurent gave me a bag of peanuts he had harvested, which I show people at these events. It's a mark of the fact that he and those in his village have so little, and yet they wanted to give something to me. I think I've been waiting for something to trigger that feeling in me, and working for World Vision in this way feels like it is connecting me with the faith I grew up with, it feels like coming home."

In 2015, Sue was involved with Action2015, a movement that involved a new set of development goals being announced, and a network of organisations – including World Vision – lobbying world leaders to fight climate change, inequality and poverty. Sue helped to launch the goals with 1,000 others on London's Millennium Bridge last September.

That campaign also involved Sue travelling to Westminster to represent World Vision at two advocacy events with peers and MPs. They discussed the implementation, monitoring and accountability of these new Sustainable Development Goals over the next 15 years.

She has also spoken at churches, colleges and community groups around Hampshire, and staffed a 'World Vision' stall at the annual cathedral fayre. If you would like her to speak in your church, please contact her on 023-9242 1291 or suetinney.worldvision@virginmedia.com.

Charity with child focus

WORLD Vision is the world's largest international children's charity. It works with children, their families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice.

It provides relief in emergencies, develops projects to improve communities, and advocates on their behalf. It works in 100 countries to help improve the lives of 100 million people worldwide.

That might involve doing everything from fighting malnutrition to ending child labour, by addressing the root causes of poverty that affect children and communities in the world's hardest places.

They are convinced that change can happen. Every morning, 17,000 under-fives wake up who would not have survived 25 years ago. They believe that no child should face the day fearing abuse, conflict or disease, and no child should go to bed hungry. They believe this can happen by 2030.

The 17 new Sustainable Development Goals were agreed by the United Nations in September 2015. They include ending poverty, ending hunger, ensuring quality education for all, achieving gender equality, reducing inequality and taking urgent action to combat climate change.

Details on www.worldvision.org.uk or www.action2015.org.