Survivor Stories: Joseph’s Sons

MODULES 1, 2, 3, & 6

MEET JOSEPH’S SONS

Joseph, a father of five children, grows coffee on a small plot of land in East Africa. It is the family’s only source of income. Last year, a couple of buyers said that they would purchase Joseph’s crop annually if they could also make use of two of Joseph’s sons full-time to work on the large plantation they recently bought. While Joseph was sorry to pull his boys out of school, he felt he had no choice. What Joseph didn’t realize is that his sons, ages 12 and 14, would earn just pennies a day, which is what the buyers – part of an organized cartel – did to keep their own profits high.

Module 2

Working ten to twelve hours a day was very hard on Joseph’s sons, and they missed home. When Joseph realized how badly his sons were being exploited, he asked the plantation owners that they be allowed to return home to continue their schooling. But the owners threatened that if Joseph’s sons left their employment, they would make sure that no one would buy Joseph’s own crop ever again, even hinting that his coffee plants might end up mysteriously burned to the ground, as happened last year in a village down the road.

Module 3

Eventually, a distant relative shared with Joseph a new CRS project that introduced local farmers to Ethical Trade Coffee. Joseph used the opportunity to tell the CRS project representatives about the plight of his sons. The CRS staff and partners responded by quietly threatening to expose the owners of the plantation where Joseph’s sons were being enslaved with a newspaper article. The alternate option provided to the plantation owners was that they must free all of the under-age, unpaid workers, without any additional harm. Joseph joined the CRS project and after about 6 months his sons were able to return to school.

Module 6

What can you do to help Joseph’s sons and others like them? Buy Ethical Trade Coffee that pays local producers fair wages so they don’t have to pull their children out of school to earn additional income