



PHOTO: MEHDI SEPEHRI

PEOPLE GROUPS: **Hidden Women**

Across Africa, there are hundreds of thousands of women who, besides immediate family, only interact with other women. *Purdah*, taken from the Persian word for “curtain,” is the practice of separating women from the outside world.

It is usually associated with Islam and is practiced in various parts of North and West Africa. Restrictions normally begin at time of puberty or marriage, and women may only leave the house in the company of a male relative, to protect the honour of their husbands or fathers.

They keep house, watch TV, and care for their children. Most have never heard the Gospel and have no way to hear it unless they are visited by Christian women.

A Christian worker in North Africa explains to AfriGO: “They call and wait and wish for visitors, and I am able to visit them because I have freedom that their other women friends don’t have - I can go visit! We talk about children,

and love, and hair, and food, and struggles, and thoughts, and God.” Through these friendships the love of the Son can be shared.

Another housebound group are the mothers of children with disabilities. Their husbands might be working or have left them due to financial tensions and stresses often related to these children. It is very difficult to use public transportation, so the majority of these women sit at home, caring for their children with disabilities as best as they know how.

Some more liberal husbands allow women to go out, but they may only associate with other women, only occasionally, and only in places considered sheltered from outside influence.

Other groups of women who need other women to reach them are women in prison, women who work to rescue prostitutes or trafficking victims.

Women of God, rise up to help your sisters!

At a Glance

- Purdah has been practiced since ancient times and today is associated with Islam and Hinduism.
- Women under purdah receive their information about the outside world from visits from other women, radio, TV and male relatives.
- Restrictions on women become barriers to girls receiving education. As a result, North African countries such as Egypt and Morocco have higher illiteracy rates for women than countries with similar economies.

Ask God to

- Relieve the isolation of these women and lead them to the ONE who can be a constant companion.
- Expose the truth, through the TV and the visits of Christian women.
- For courage, love and protection for Christian women befriending hidden women.
- Protection for women who decide to follow Christ and for the salvation of their male relatives.



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