

Steve McCurry

**Voorbij de
camera**

TERRA

Foreword by Steve McCurry	6
Shooting Under Fire	8
India By Rail	28
Monsoon	48
The Afghan Girl	72
After the Storm	84
Gateway to India	102
In the Vale of Sorrow, Kashmir	138
Sanctuary: The Temples of Angkor	154
A Country Apart	172
September 11th	190
The Tibetans	214
Beyond the Footsteps of Buddha	232
Hazara: Strangers in the Homeland	256
Fighting HIV/AIDS	284
Chronology	302
Bibliography	310
Index	316



Synopsis

In 1979, under deteriorating security conditions, Soviet troops entered Afghanistan to the aid of the Government, currently struggling to quell the US-backed mujahideen rebels. At the same time, Steve McCurry would enter Afghanistan under a similar veil, cloaked in local garments and smuggled under the border with his revolutionist guides. McCurry traveled with the Mujahideen intermittently over a number of years, exposing the deeply personal strife behind a civil war backed by the world's two major superpowers. His images would define the conflict and a world-renowned photojournalist was born.

Dates & Locations

1979 Afghanistan, Pakistan
1980 Afghanistan, Pakistan
1982 Afghanistan

Selected Publications

The New York Times, 3 December 1979, p.2
The New York Times, 27 December 1979, p.1
The New York Times, 29 December 1979, pp.1, 6
The New York Times, 30 December 1979, p.3
Philadelphia Inquirer, 30 December 1979, p.7A
The New York Times, 31 December 1979, p.A6, A11
Expressen, 7 January 1980, p.8–9
International Herald Tribune, 9 January 1980, p.1
The Christian Science Monitor, 22 January 1980, pp.12–13
Paris Match, January 1980, p.30
Stern, February 1980, p.19C
TIME, 28 April 1980, p.31
Modern Photojournalism, May 1980, p.13–22
Newsweek, Month 1982, p.21–9

Shooting Under Fire



Father and son, Kunar, Afghanistan, 1979

Steve McCurry in Afghanistan, 1980



In late May of 1979, as the rising temperatures signalled the impending arrival of summer, Steve McCurry was journeying north from Central India to the mountainous province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, situated at the western tip of the Himalayas in Pakistan. He was into the second year of his travels around Southern Asia and over the previous months, he had been selling images to various small magazines, for a few hundred dollars a piece, as a means to sustain himself on his journey. When McCurry arrived in Chitral, a small town at the base of the vast Tirich Mir Mountain, he immediately sought out a cheap hotel. From this base he was able to set out to explore the surrounding area. This was to be another adventure in McCurry's journey from, in his own words, 'being a news photographer in Philadelphia to becoming an established magazine photographer.'

Prior to arriving in Chitral, McCurry had been reading about the developing situation in Afghanistan in a local newspaper and discovered how thousands of refugees had been fleeing the growing civil war and setting up camps along the Afghan-Pakistan border. A few days into his stay, McCurry met some such refugees at his hotel and an unexpected opportunity presented itself. 'They were from Nuristan' he recalled, 'and they explained how many of the villages in their area had been destroyed by the Afghan army. These guys were really scared and nervous and



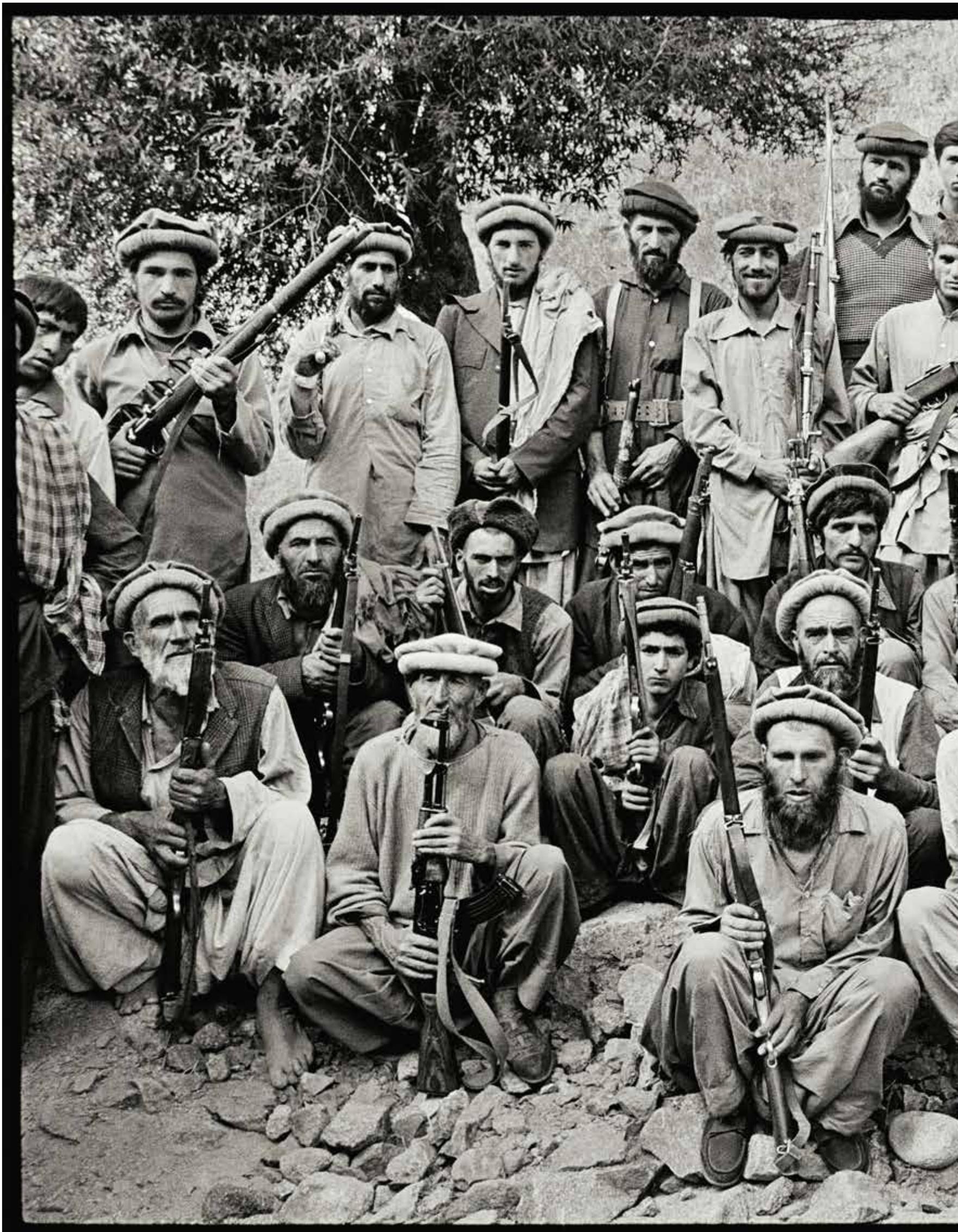
Afghanistan, 1979



Afghanistan, 1980

worried about the future of their country. I told them I was a photographer and they insisted that I come and photograph the civil war that was raging. I had never photographed in an area of conflict before and I wasn't sure how I would react. When they came for me the next morning, I was having second thoughts, but I wanted to honor my commitment so I went ahead. They dressed me in an old *shalwar kameez* and sneaked me across the border. They referred to themselves as the Mujahideen and were part of the uprising that was turning into a civil war.'

McCurry trekked with the Mujahideen for several days through one of the covert passages between Pakistan and Afghanistan that traverse the Hindu Kush Mountains. 'There was a lot of fear just in leaving Pakistan in disguise and going into another country', McCurry recalled. He soon discovered that he was, in his words 'woefully unprepared'. 'Among my belongings', McCurry continues, 'were a plastic cup, a Swiss Army knife, two camera bodies, four lenses, a bag of film and a few bags of airline peanuts. My naiveté was breathtaking, yet my Afghan guides protected me and treated me as their guest. That was my first experience with the legendary Afghan hospitality.' What McCurry found when he arrived in Afghanistan was the beginning of one of the defining conflicts of the cold-war era. Ultimately, it was to become a proxy war, a conflict in which



Mujahideen fighters, Afghanistan, 1980





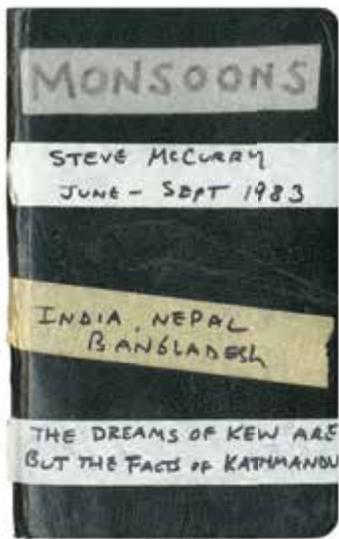
from a talk by Lt General Hussain Muhammed Ershad held at a Monsoon Rainfall Prediction workshop in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Through Veslind's notes, McCurry discovered when the best time for heavy rain in the Nepalese mountains is, and the areas suffering from the worst erosion because of the annual downpour were to be found in the countryside around Kathmandu valley. In the midst of the chaos of the monsoon, such information was vital and it enabled McCurry to be in the right place at the right time as he spent several weeks photographing in this particular region.

McCurry also looked in the newspaper everyday to discover when the rains were predicted to come. 'I'd discover', notes McCurry, 'that the Monsoon had arrived in a particular region. So, I'd end up jumping on a plane and going there. Or maybe I would be in a café having lunch or dinner and it would start to rain and I'd drop everything and rush out and take pictures. You have to respond immediately to the situation because those heavy rains really don't last for long. When it's a really heavy downpour, these things only last for 5-10 minutes, so if it starts to rain you have to race outside and start shooting.'

For McCurry, these downpours offered both a practical challenge and a marvelous opportunity to capture something truly unique. In the first instance, he was faced with keeping his cameras and lenses dry; not an easy proposition when you are wading through flood waters 4 feet deep or fighting a sudden deluge. 'I carried a large gold umbrella when I shot in the rain', McCurry explains, 'I had my back turned to the wind, and fifty per cent of my time was spent keeping the camera lens dry. Sometimes in the downpour, I felt that my front lens was the only dry object in a radius of fifty miles, an unnatural object in a world meant to be wet! I was always soaked, but the lens survived. I learned to hold the umbrella myself, balanced on my shoulder, almost invariably, an assistant would squeeze himself under the umbrella, forcing my camera out.' Yet, in such moments, he was able to capture images

of beauty and misfortune, from such scenes as a young girl looking desperately cold and dejected as she tries to shelter herself against the downpour (see p. xx), to a humorous image of a dog waiting for a door to open while the waters continue to rise around him (see p. xx). 'For me,' McCurry continues, 'the weather has mostly been a congenial ally, creating mood and drama for photographs. But in the heart of the monsoon, I was forced to immerse myself in weather so profound that nothing else mattered – not art, not culture, not intellect. It was a lesson in humility.'

The monsoon would not sweep across the Indian subcontinent in a methodical and predictable wave. Rather, one area would suffer monumental levels of rainfall, while others would be left untouched. During one period of calm before the waters broke, McCurry documented the life of the fishermen of Goa, who base their working life around the cycle of the dry and wet monsoons (the cold dry monsoon coming in the winter months, and the warm rainy season in the summer). As McCurry recalled, 'I spent a few weeks in the little fishing village of Sirgao, near the capital city of Panaji. The seas were already getting rough with the storms raging in the Indian Ocean, but the real monsoon was nowhere in sight. For several nights I slept in a fisherman's house, awakening at 4am to sail with them into the dark waters in their small, carved dugout canoes. I would sit on the bottom of the boat with my camera bag clutched between my knees, with two oarsmen kneeling fore and aft. We would move quickly through the bay for hour after hour, the oarsmen's blades knifing tirelessly through the water. The seas were muddy from earlier rains that had washed silt into the sea from the mountains to the north, and sometimes waves broke over the gunwhales. I was afraid we would be swamped, but the fishermen would simply laugh. They had been fishing this way for generations in the fragile craft even into the early days of the monsoons. It would get much worse, they would say, and grin at me. They would fish until



STEVE'S HIKING'S

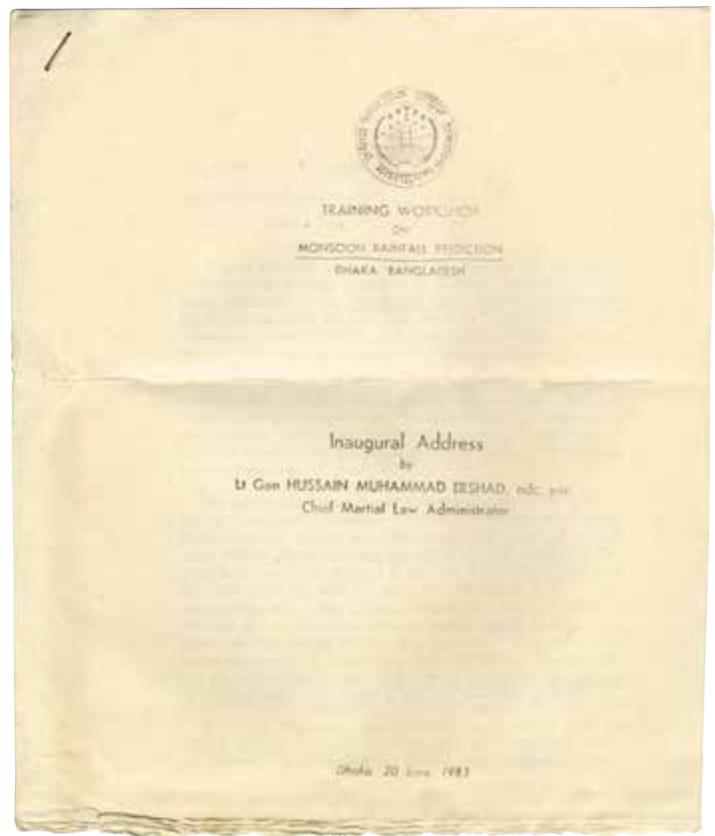
- KEEP YOUR COOL WITH "THEI" DRINKS.
- CONQUITURE TIME FOR BEST DEPT. JUST ZIP AROUND.
- KEEP YOUR TRAVEL DAYS DOWN.
- IF ITS GMA STAY WITH IT YOU HAVE TO GET INTO THE LAZER TO MAKE GOLD PICTURES.

EMERGENCY FUNDS

PAK AIR FLIGHTS

WED	NIGHT
THUR	NIGHT
FRI	NIGHT
SAT	NIGHT
SUN	NIGHT

PHONE 393994
392254



** TO DO LIST

- CHECK TIMES OF INDIA FOR FLOODING IN GUJARAT
- CALL EYE DOCTORS RE: CHINA MONSOON TRIP
- CALL WEATHER MAN IN CALCUTTA
- CALL BRIAN BRAKE
- DEEPAK PUL/TIME MACHINE SHIPMENT OF 30 ROLLS OF KODACHROME
- CHECK MONSOON FESTIVAL TEEJ IN JAIPUR
- TRY AND GET MORE THAN 4 HOURS OF SLEEP
- GET A BIGGER UMBRELLA!

MANICORN - ALL NIGHT VIBR FOR LANDSLIDE
INDIA - THE FRAGILE MOUNTAIN
PHENA TAL WATERSHED - AN EXPERIMENT IN LAND MANAGEMENT THE WATER DRAINS INTO PHENA LAKE
FIREWOOD - MAIN ENERGY SOURCE TREES
- 1 one used to burn a single round that would produce fuel, produce thousands of pounds then from certain circles being not suitable for cars retain moisture & slow release it would be hard to carry if anything more than 1000 lbs a ton
TENTING MANAT OF CHANTARA PIONEERED A NEW APPROACH TO FORESTRY

- BEST TIME FOR HEAVY RAINS IN MTS. GENERALLY THE MONTH OF JULY.
- AREA OF WORST EROSION THE DEEP RIGHT AROUND KATHMANDU VALLEY - THE ROAD TO POKHARA.
- WOULD LAST 2 WEEKS IN AUGUST BE OK FOR MONSOON RAINS?
USED TO PREDICT, IT IS WITHIN MONSOON SEASON BUT NOT ON EARTH'S TIME SCHEDULE, AS WE FOUND OUT.
- CAN A PLANE OR HELICOPTER FLY TO LUKLA OR JOMSAM IN CLOUDY MONSOON WEATHER?
YES BUT IT'S DANGEROUS AND YOU PAY MORE.
- CONTACTS IN REFORESTATION PROGRAM?
SEE YOU IN WASHINGTON IN SEPT - OCT. GOOD LUCK!

THE DREAMS OF KEW ARE BUT THE FACTS OF KATHMANDU R.K. Flooded east of Timaru

TRAVERSE JOURNALS VALLEY OF THE FLOWERS
KHANDOLA - NEARLY 1000 ft. a half mile

SSD WEATHER STATION LEAKAGE BALLON IS RELEASED AT 10:00 AM 10:00 AM IN DIAMETER 1000 FT. AT 5:30 AM 4:30 PM

BRAKE'S MONSOON

"A BLACK SEA OF OPEN UMBRELLAS SWAYED AROUND THE HILTOP TEMPLE OF SARANATH (GODA) LORD OF THE UNIVERSE. THOSE WHO WISHED HAVE COME TO RAINING TO CELEBRATE HIS FESTIVAL ONE OF THE YEARS GREATEST IT ALWAYS OCCURS AT THE HEIGHT OF THE RAINY SEASON

- THE LOVE SUNDAY BEAUTY OF A DANCING GIRL IN JAIPUR TYPICALS THE LUXURIANTLY CRISP AIR OF THE MONSOON SEASON SHE IS CELEBRATING THE TEEJ FESTIVAL WHEN THOUSANDS DROUGHT

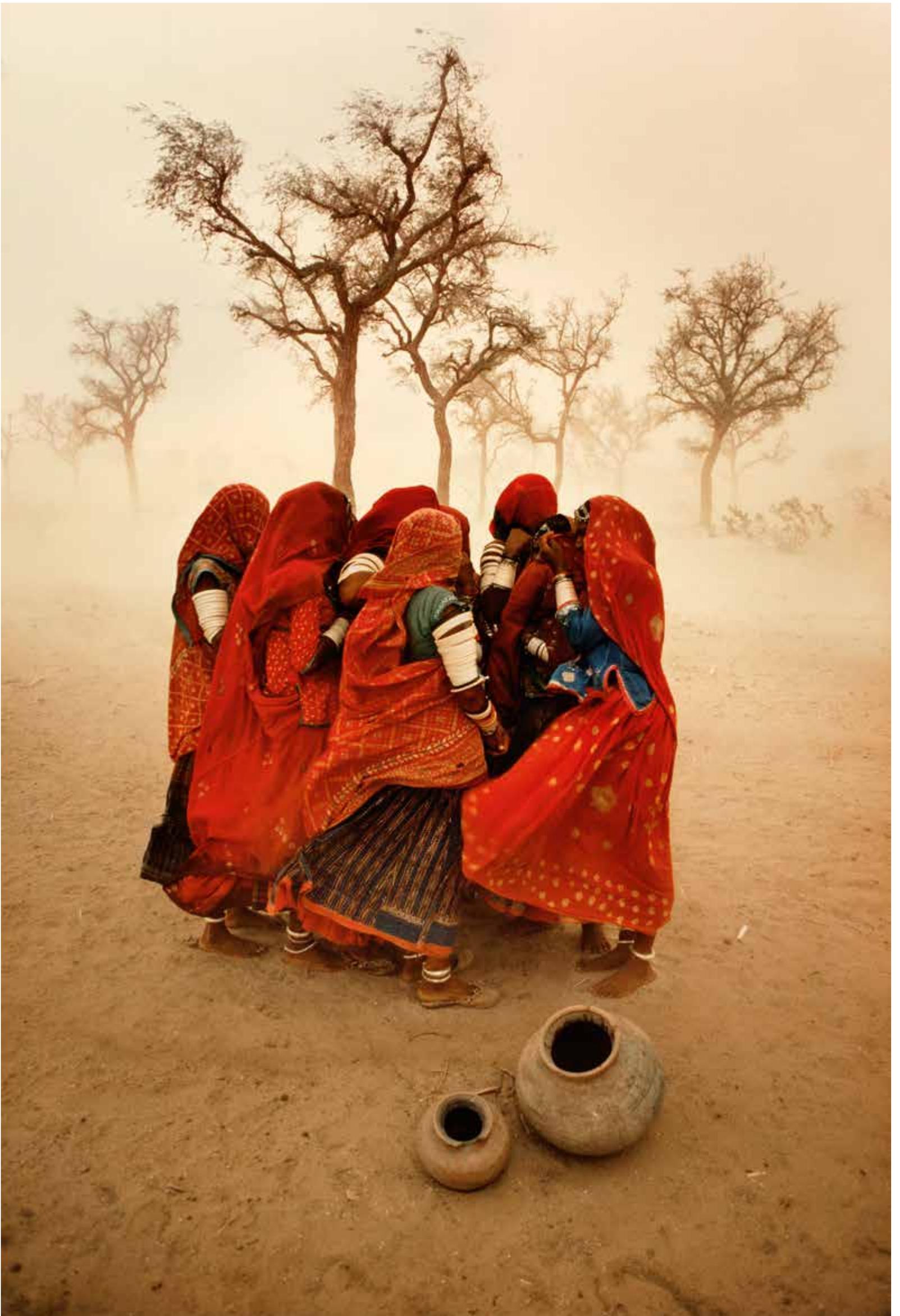
6 EXPIRES ON 1 FEB 1983 FOREIGN EXCHANGE CLUB CASH COUPON \$5.00 THE DOLLAR \$5.00

6 EXPIRES ON 1 FEB 1983 FOREIGN EXCHANGE CLUB CASH COUPON \$1.00 THE DOLLAR \$1.00

Pages from McCurry's Monsoon journal, 1983

Programme for a Training Workshop on Monsoon Rainfall Prediction, Dhaka, Bangladesh, June 1983

Notes on the monsoon, 1983



Dust storm, Rajasthan, India, 1983



Chandni Chowk, Old Delhi, India, 1983





Spreads from *Access to Life* (2009) featuring McCurry's photographs of Duong Van Tuyen

placed in the middle of a rice field. They are both crying. Luan is holding on to her daughter as she puts some more incense sticks into the grave. The grey sky, the dilapidated building (once a church) in the distance, and the wet muddy field, all contribute to a scene of profound grief and sorrow. McCurry followed the mother and daughter back to their home and photographed them walking together through the field full of fresh green shoots. Although we know Luan is also HIV positive, it's a final picture that embodies some hope for the future, and reflects positively on The Global Fund's work.

The second person McCurry photographed was Duong Van Tuyen. Also living in the Thái Nguyên province, he was married to Luong, a young girl from the local village. The couple had a two-year-old son, Toan, and lived in a small two-roomed house. Like Luoc, they ran a small farmstead, given to them by Tuyen's father as a wedding present. The labour was hard and Tuyen had to supplement his income with other work. Yet, beyond such difficulties, they considered themselves lucky to have the life they had. However, all this changed when in June 2007, Tuyen found himself in hospital after being diagnosed as HIV positive. 'Luong was a young woman who had just married at 19,' McCurry notes, 'she had a small child and expected to live a typical farmer's life in the countryside. Out of the blue, she learned that her husband was dying from AIDS – and that she too had been infected with the virus. Even though her husband had infected her, she stood by him; 'I don't know when he got his disease,' Luong said. 'Before getting married, he seemed a good man and good tempered. I don't know anything about when he got infected. If you talk about me placing blame, then I don't. I don't place blame on anybody, because it's this disease; it's heartless and it's easy to transmit.'

Knowing free treatment was available was the one thing that gave her hope. Tuyen noted that when Luong 'knew that I had the disease,

she said, "You scream at the heavens in despair – just go get the medications." But stubbornly, in the early stages of the disease, he refused to go. Becoming, according to Luong, 'more hot-tempered', he argued that they were in debt and could not afford more hospital fees. Only when the disease was advanced did he wholeheartedly enter into taking the medication. However, it was too late and he only survived for 17 days after beginning the Antiretroviral drugs, dying in December of 2007.

McCurry's journey from discovering Tuyen was HIV positive, to him dying, reveal images of fear, pain and acceptance. Each of his images chart a stage in this journey, utilising the qualities of light, tone, and colour to reveal something of what McCurry himself was feeling when in the presence of people faced with the possible end of their life. In one of the earliest photographs, McCurry pictures Tuyen praying in the bedroom. We can see he has already begun to lose weight; his coat seems far too big for his small frame. Later on, maybe on the same day, Tuyen is seen looking through the mosquito net that surrounds the bed. He appears pensive, unsure of what is going to happen next. Clearly, he is struggling with the thought that he has infected his wife with HIV. 'At first', Tuyen noted during this time, 'I thought, "That's it – now I will die from this."' After that, many people encouraged me to go get medications to take. With health, I can still help my wife and son. I can still live with my wife and son and my parents. But if I die, I don't know what my wife and child will do. How will they live? If they are infected, they won't know how to get the medications and take them. They'll die just like me. So I try to live.' The subsequent pictures by McCurry reveal Tuyen's expectations of prolonging his life to have been unrealistic. In each frame his spirit seems to ebb away, until in one image he just looks up towards McCurry's camera barely conscious of his presence.

When McCurry visited Vietnam, he thought that the work The Global Fund were carrying out



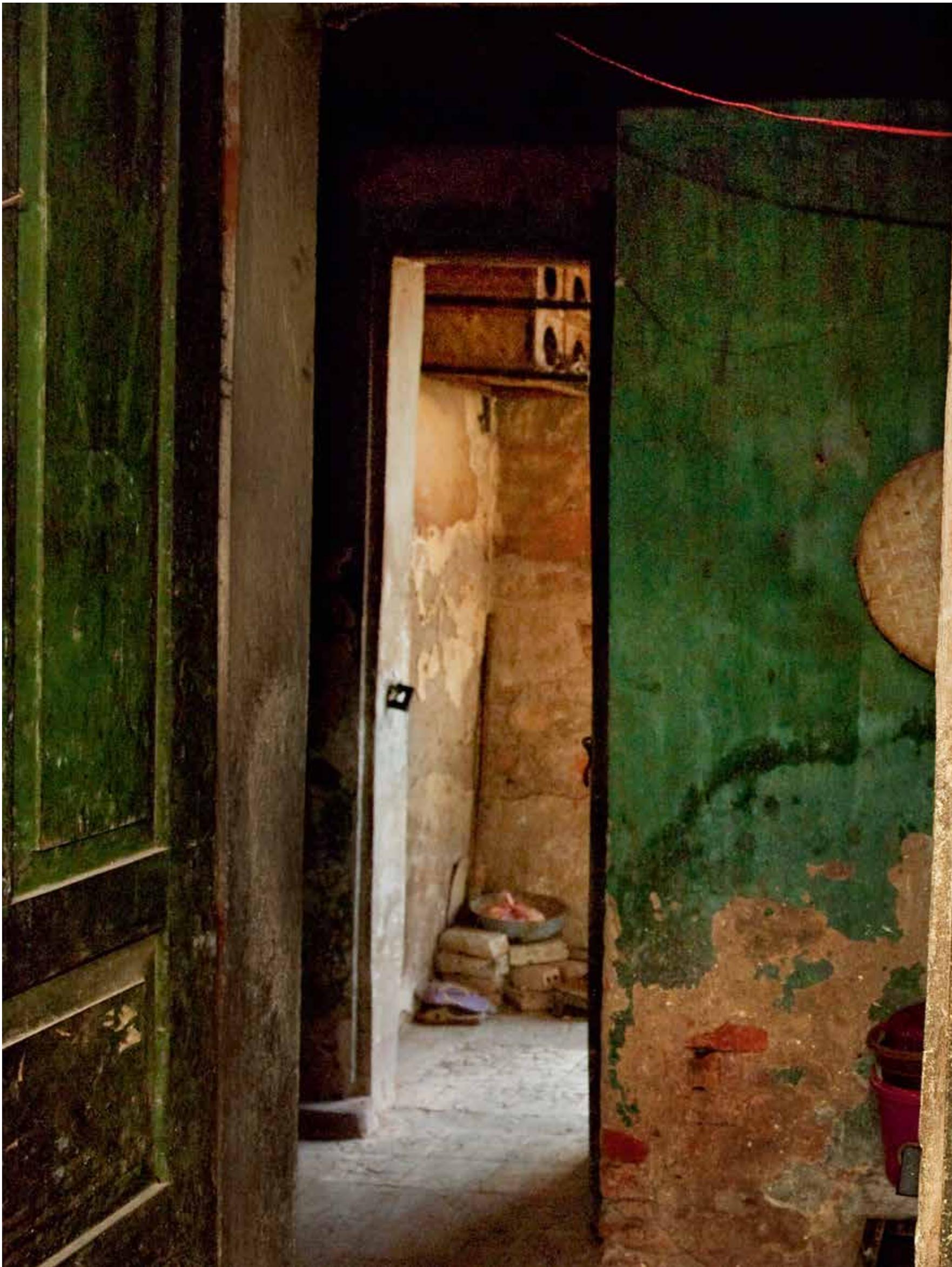
Spreads from *Access to Life* (2009) featuring McCurry's photographs of Nguyễn Quốc Khánh

would translate to stories that were positive and life affirming. When it became clear that even with all the help of medication and health advice, many of the sufferers were going to die, travelling from his hotel to be with the families everyday became emotionally draining. The remaining photographs from McCurry's time with Tuyen and Luong are testament to the pure grief and deep sorrow McCurry was faced with picturing. In one picture Luong is seen in the back of a car, tears rolling down her cheeks. The picture was taken on Luong's journey back home after she had just received news that she was HIV positive. "Now I too am infected by the disease", she said at the time. "I'm just 21 years old. It is possible that my son is also infected [but he subsequently tested negative]. I thought a lot about that. I was very depressed. I wanted to die. For three days after getting my results, I thought a lot about everything. But I would still get up when I had to prepare lunch or dinner for my son." In another moment, taken after the death of his father, we see the two-year-old Toan being consoled by Luong. McCurry has captured them seemingly isolated, cut adrift from the world around them. After losing her husband, Luong told McCurry that she feared she would lose everything. Such thoughts haunted her on a daily basis. Now she was alone, and one of her greatest worries was that Tuyen's father would take away the farm and possibly even her son. Many of McCurry's pictures reveal Luong walking alone along an empty track cradling her son, praying at her late husband's grave, or hugging Toan in the early evening. In the final picture from this series, Luong is seen toiling the earth outside her house. The fading light is only punctuated by the golden glow from inside the house. Toan is asleep and Luong is seizing the last few rays of light to do so much needed work. In the face of everything, the only answer is to carry on. In these images McCurry had to draw on all his thirty years of experience to translate the experience of sorrow and anguish into images that would serve The Global Fund's

aims of both informing the viewer of their work, as well encouraging governments and private benefactors to give money to the organization. The results are works of deep sensitivity, that reveal how the efforts of local treatment centers offer a rare lifeline for sufferers in a country that often ignores the problem.

The final series of images McCurry produced for the 'Access to Life' project were of Nguyễn Quốc Khánh. Khánh lived in a Hanoi apartment, and had contracted HIV when working in one of the illegal goldmines that pepper the central provinces of Vietnam. He began working at the mine one year after he was married. Maybe it was being away from home, the isolation and boredom, but like many other miners he began to use opium. Once he was hooked on opium, the locals began selling heroin instead and Khánh, inevitably, became a user and, shortly after, an addict. After leaving the mine, Khánh could not shake the habit and eventually went into a government-sponsored rehabilitation unit in Phu Tho Province. Unfortunately, just when he needed to be getting help, some of the inpatients had smuggled heroin into the centre and they would often end up sharing a needle. Khánh believed it was possibly at that moment that he contracted HIV.

Khánh's stay at the rehab clinic took place in 2001/2002 and, aside from a bad case of diarrhoea, he displayed no obvious symptoms that he was HIV-positive. It was not until 2007 that he became aware of having the virus. Throughout that year he had been getting gradually weaker and was spending more and more time in bed. The family was suffering financially because of Khánh's absence from work, and his wife Tiep had to support the family, which also included two children, his 16-year-old son Thanh and 13-year-old daughter Binh. The family business was 'a breakfast stall in the market that was her family's main source of income' recalls McCurry. 'But once people learned that her husband, Khánh, had AIDS, many of them stopped buying food from her.' Such myths and misunderstandings that



Interior, Phu Tho province, Vietnam, 2007

