

RESTORATION STORY

PLAYING YOUR PART SO THAT EVERYONE
AND ALL OF CREATION CAN FLOURISH



tearfund

ACTION

THE BIG PICTURE

GOOD NEWS

Together, we have seen extreme poverty halved since 1990.¹
More people than ever are able to fulfil their God-given potential.

- ✓ More children are in school than ever before.
- ✓ Diseases such as malaria are retreating.
- ✓ Access to electricity has reached a record high.

BAD NEWS

However, certain challenges we face today are undoing all this progress and making life harder for people in poverty.

- ✗ Climate change is pushing people back into poverty by causing more floods and droughts and making the rains less reliable. As a result, in 2016 world hunger increased for the first time this century.²
- ✗ We are using up natural resources at a relentless pace, which has knocked creation out of balance. Since 1970, the populations of wildlife species have fallen by sixty per cent.³
- ✗ Inequality is increasing: the gap between the richest and poorest people is growing. The richest one per cent of people own more wealth than the rest of the world.⁴

A CHOICE TO MAKE

We now have a dilemma: the more we consume and our economies grow, the further creation is pushed to breaking point.

'Over the years, droughts have become more frequent and severe... The rains are unreliable and inadequate'

DAACAD, SOMALILAND

Because of how our world has developed since the Industrial Revolution, these two things – economic progress and environmental sustainability – are tangled up together.

An end to extreme poverty is still possible. But we need a new way forward – one that disentangles economic growth from environmental impact, and provides a sustainable future that works for everyone.

We believe the Bible gives us a vision for an alternative way ahead.

THE WAY FORWARD: AN ECONOMY OF RESTORATION

In the Bible we see God call his people to model a better way of living to the world around them: 'to love God and their neighbour as themselves' (Leviticus 19:18; Luke 10:27).

In the Old Testament God gives laws about living in ways that care both for people in poverty and creation. In Leviticus 25 there's a revolutionary idea called jubilee: one year in 50 is like a 'reset button' for the economy and society. Debts are cancelled, slaves are set free, and animals and land are allowed to rest.

It's a 3,500-year-old vision of a biblical economy where all people and all creation can flourish. When Jesus declares in Luke 4, 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me... to proclaim good news to the poor... [and] the year of the Lord's favour,' he is referring to this same idea of jubilee – proclaiming freedom and restoration.

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From creation and fall in Genesis, through to future renewal in Revelation, the Bible's overarching story is about God wanting to save the whole world from the results of sin, and offering restoration to everything that sin has broken. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God deals with sin and makes a way for all things to experience his healing, restoration and peace in the fullest sense.

With his help, we can play our part in this story of restoration. We can pursue a more just and sustainable world, where we continue to make progress but not at the expense of others or our planet.

This new way forward will require some huge changes to how we live, but we can uncouple our progress from damaging creation by shaping it around the biblical idea of restoration.

A 'restorative' economy would:

- ensure everyone has the chance to flourish
- restore the balance in creation
- reduce inequality between rich and poor

Below are some of our ideas to make our economy more 'restorative':

Ensure everyone has the chance to flourish

With 700 million people still trapped in extreme poverty,⁵ our economies must be made to work for everyone. This includes creating fair and just jobs, social protection for the vulnerable, and continuing current levels of overseas aid.

Restore the balance in creation

Working towards a world that no longer contributes to climate change is crucial. We should reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2045 and create a circular economy (keeping resources in use for as long as possible, for example reusing and repairing). Getting there will require us to live within environmental limits, and giving God's creation time to rest.

Reduce inequality between the rich and poor

Rebalancing our tax system will help reduce extreme inequality. If we tackle tax avoidance and shift the burden of tax onto activities we want to discourage (such as carbon emissions, single-use plastic and excessive concentrations of wealth), we can move it away from good activities (such as work).

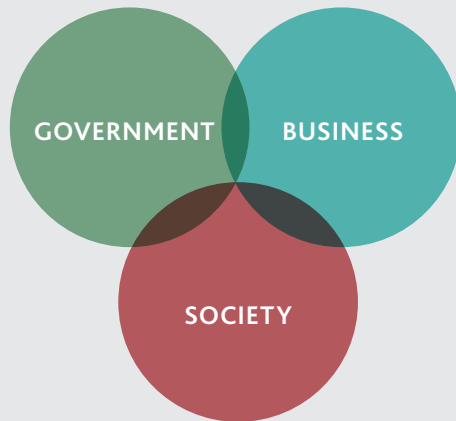
Photo: Tom Price/Tearfund



HOW WE GET THERE

This new way forward, an economy of restoration, will require huge changes in all areas of society, both collectively and individually.

Changes to laws are powerful (think of the plastic bag tax!) but often politicians think only of short-term election cycles and play it safe.



Businesses can and should provide innovative solutions to today's challenges, but often prioritise cheap and popular products over protecting people and planet.

Ultimately it is the signals we send in what we choose to buy, how we vote and how we speak up that will cause business and government to deliver change at the scale and speed required.

Currently, change in all three of these areas is far too slow. But when people come together in a movement that both embodies and inspires a vision of a better world, transformative change can happen.

We've seen it in the US civil rights movement and in the push for action on women's rights and even plastic pollution. These movements faced almost insurmountable odds and yet inspired change in governments, businesses and wider society.

Together, we can work towards a world where poverty is eliminated, everyone has the chance to flourish and creation is well cared for.

PLAY YOUR PART

SPEAK UP

Together we can call on decision-makers to take action towards a more 'restorative' economy. Meet or write to your MP and express your concerns about climate change and poverty. Join in with Tearfund's latest campaigns and those of similar organisations.

PRAY

Prayer changes things. You can pray at any time of day, on your own or with others. Why not organise a prayer room or pray your way through a news app?

INSPIRE YOUR CHURCH

Help your church understand the challenges the world faces, and the hope Jesus brings. We've made some resources to help you organise Bible studies and talks, which you can download from tearfund.org/action

LIVE DIFFERENTLY

Food

Reduce your food waste at home and reduce how much meat you eat, especially beef and lamb.

Waste

Use a reusable bottle/cup, buy less, swap clothes with friends or visit charity shops. Even try going 'zero waste' step by step.

Travel

Use public transport, walk or cycle instead of using a car. Reduce how often you fly or even go flight-free for a year.

Energy

Switch to a one hundred per cent renewable energy provider and consider installing solar panels.

Generosity

Borrow, lend and share instead of buying: join cooperatives for cars or tools. Consider if you can give radically above tithing.

Money

Buy fairly traded goods, boycott unethical companies, move to an ethical bank, and ask your pension fund to invest more ethically.

As we make lifestyle changes, we model a better way to the world around us and join a growing movement of change-makers, but the challenges we face are too urgent for us simply to stop there. Together, we can also speak up and inspire others to act – building a movement that brings restoration.

THIS IS OUR INVITATION TO YOU

Each of us can play our part as we make changes in our own lives, inspire others to follow, and call on powerful decision-makers to do the same. Let's talk about this at the dinner table, pray for it at church and join with thousands of others as we speak up for change.

The challenges we face may be huge, but our faith brings such a hopeful vision for a just and sustainable world. Together, we can see a world where everyone has enough and creation is well cared for.

PLAY YOUR PART:

www.tearfund.org/jointhestory

For more on our vision for a restorative economy:
www.tearfund.org/restorativeeconomy

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References:

- ¹ World Bank, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity*, 2018
- ² FAO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*, 2018
- ³ WWF, *Living Planet Report*, 2018
- ⁴ Oxfam, *Reward Work, Not Wealth*, 2018
- ⁵ *The World Bank Poverty Overview*, 2018

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