From helpless to helper

Life is not easy for women like Halima*. Living in a rural village in south Tajikistan, her country is the poorest in the former Soviet Union and endured six years of civil war after its independence in 1991. But Tearfund is making a difference to people like Halima. Below she explains how a Tearfund partner working in the region helped her.

‘Twenty years ago my husband was killed in the civil war and I was left alone with a small child. After that my sister-in-law kicked me out of the family home and I had to return to my parents.

‘My mother worked as a seamstress and I started to help her. When she also died I was left with my son and a brother who has a disability. According to Asian laws a woman without a husband is not allowed to leave the house, so things became very difficult. I had nothing but an old sewing machine.

‘Day and night I prayed to God that he would show me how to earn our daily bread. Then one day the village mullah [religious leader] visited my house with a woman from a non-governmental organisation. I was surprised at first because after my mother’s death nobody visited us. She invited me to organise a group of girls to study sewing women’s clothes.

‘With a group of ten girls I organised a sewing class in my house. People in our village are poor, so the girls paid for the lessons with food. To me it really helped as I was able to feed my son and brother.

‘The people in our village were very excited about our work. Recently the mullah, together with the inhabitants of the village, built us a room where I can hold classes. I now have respect and people come to me for advice on all issues.’

Thanks to your support our partners in south Tajikistan are identifying people like Halima and releasing their potential to bless others.

*Name has been changed to protect identity.
PLEASE PRAY

- Ask that the country’s economy would improve and that the resulting benefits would quickly filter down to rural areas.
- Lift up women in Tajikistan and ask that they will be increasingly empowered to contribute to their communities.
- Pray for protection from current security threats in south Tajikistan from across the Afghan border.

Out of the darkness

Many young people from Myanmar (also known as Burma) are crossing the border into China to look for work. Away from their families and with no local connections they are an easy target for traffickers.

Naga* is a 25-year-old mother of two from Lashio in Myanmar. Desperate to provide for her family, she took a job collecting tea leaves in Lincang, China. Things went as planned for three months, until another worker on the plantation trafficked her and sold her as a wife to an elderly farmer. Naga did not know the local language or even how to get home if she escaped.

At home in Lashio her parents hadn’t heard from her for two months so they contacted the local church. Tearfund’s partner Cedar Fund has trained local churches to raise awareness of trafficking, linking them with Chinese churches in places where the youth have been migrating. These churches are from the same ethnic group and speak the same language as the Myanmese communities.

Through the church network, Pastor John of a church in Lincang sought Naga out. The farmer demanded the price he had paid for her to be returned before he would let her go (around £3,300). But with the pressure of the church and local leaders he was forced to give her up. Thanks to your support the church is being empowered to demand the return of people like Naga.

Naga is now safely back with her children and says, ‘If there was not the help of Pastor John and the church I would have lived in darkness for the rest of my life.’

*Name has been changed to protect identity

PLEASE PRAY

- Ask for this terrible cycle of trafficking to end and that those responsible will be brought to justice.
- Pray for more livelihood opportunities within local communities so people like Naga do not feel forced to leave their families.
- Give thanks that the church is uniting in this way and ask that links will continue to grow so more people like Naga can be saved.
New work and a new heart

Through Tearfund’s Community Church Mobilisation process (CCMP) churches are empowered to help the local people that need it most. As a result of a closer relationship with the church, some people also meet Jesus. But for Alfred, from Buhera in Zimbabwe, it happened the other way around.

Alfred lost his father when he was young and the family led a very difficult life for many years, struggling to find work and living in poor housing.

Things took a different turn when Alfred attended a meeting in his village, hosted by the Apostolic Faith Mission Church. ‘I was really moved by the testimonies and the next Sunday I went to church and gave my life to Christ,’ he says. At the church, a CCMP facilitator spoke about income-generation initiatives. ‘I really felt in my heart that my breakthrough had come,’ says Alfred.

‘I decided to join the beekeeping training organised by the CCMP facilitator.’ Alfred now has ten hives and has joined a cooperative to sell the produce. He also trained in conservation farming and harvested one and a half tonnes of maize at his first attempt. Alfred says, ‘We had never achieved such a harvest before. I sold one tonne and purchased my first cow. I was really ecstatic.’ The following year he harvested two tonnes, and purchased another cow and four goats.

Alfred says, ‘When I look back I see how God has transformed my life from being a non-believer and a poor peasant to being a firm believer who can support his family.’

Thanks to your faithful support people like Alfred are seeing a breakthrough in every area of their lives and are able to build a future for their families.

PLEASE PRAY

- Lift up the CCMP work in Zimbabwe and ask that it will be able to reach out to increasing numbers of people like Alfred.
- Pray that more people will come to know Jesus through this work.
- Give thanks for the Apostolic Faith Mission Church and pray for its leaders and congregation.