

02 WHAT WE ARE DOING ABOUT IT



tearfund

HOME IS... SOMEWHERE SAFE AND FREE FROM FEAR

Tamam used to live a quiet and comfortable life near Northern Syria with her family. They had a home in the countryside where they reared goats, cultivated fruit, vegetables and herbs, and had an olive grove. Tamam remembers, 'a big land where we used to walk. We would just walk and not worry.' It was a simple and happy life: Tamam had everything she needed.

When conflict came to her village, all of this was ripped apart. Armed forces occupied the area and soon life became a daily struggle – there was no electricity or running water. All the crops died, the animals starved and the family became hungry when the food supplies ran out or became unaffordable.

When daily life became unbearable, Tamam and her children fled. It was a frightening and arduous journey through the night. They had nothing except their identity papers. Thankfully, Tamam managed to grab a small bag of family photographs. The most precious picture shows her husband (who died in a road accident) and her home in Northern Syria: now it's just a pile of dust and rubble.





Tamam and her family have been forced to start a new life in Lebanon

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

'This is the garden in front of my home,' says Tamam. 'It was a beautiful day and everything around us was nice. It was a happy moment. All that's left of that moment is this photo and me. Everything else has gone. My husband, the garden, my home... they're all gone but I remain.'

Tamam's family now live in two tiny rooms in a makeshift settlement in a slum area in the middle of Beirut. It is tiny, cramped and dangerous. The buildings are badly constructed and roofs often collapse. The neighbourhood is not safe for her traumatised children and finding enough money to pay the rent is a constant struggle. Rain pours into homes where tangled power lines threaten electrocution. Tamam is devastated that she and her children live in such conditions, with nowhere to farm or keep animals.

'In Syria we didn't have financial pressure,' she says. 'We didn't have to worry about making ends meet. We didn't have to pay rent, we had our own home. We were more comfortable and life was easier. Here we've faced economic pressure: paying for rent, paying for the children and all of their needs.'



Tamam treasures her few photos of family life back in Syria

OVERCOMING TRAUMA

Life is tough but Tearfund's partner Tahaddi Education Center is right in the heart of the settlement, reaching out with love and care. They help children like Tamam's to overcome the trauma that they have experienced so they can enjoy a better future.

When she had no money to support her children, the Tahaddi centre helped Tamam to set up her new home – giving her mattresses and financial support when she first arrived.

Later, Tamam was delighted to join Tahaddi's sewing programme. There she has learnt a new skill – and passion – in tailoring, which provides essential income. Just as importantly, Tamam has found a warm welcome, a loving fellowship and a new sense of home.

To Tamam, the Tahaddi centre is a home where she can be released from the horrors of the past. She can live in safety and recover her self-worth, dignity and health while her children can get trauma support and an education. She is starting to grow in skills she never knew she had while building positive relationships with the centre staff, volunteers and her 'sisters' in the sewing group.





CENTRE OF HOPE

'I would like to thank the Tahaddi centre,' says Tamam. 'But I would also thank the other women who are with me in the sewing programme. They have become like sisters for me. They're very caring, very kind.'

Tamam's new skills have helped her to be more positive about the future, and allowed her to dream of returning to Syria one day. 'When I think about going back to my home one day, I feel happy. Because now I will be able to open a sewing shop and teach my children the same skills. We can make a living from this. We will have to build a new house on the same land. Because no one can live there now, it is in ruins.'

'It's hard to explain what home means to me. Home is the feeling of having all my family and holding them dear in my heart. Without them, my heart would be empty.'



MEET OUR PARTNER IN LEBANON

Established in 2008 to serve and give hope back to vulnerable Lebanese families. Since the onset of the refugee crisis, Tearfund partner Tahaddi has also been supporting Syrian families. It has two centres in the heart of a slum area in the middle of Beirut where many thousands of Syrian families live.



Tahaddi operates a community-based health centre which provides free medical care to hundreds of patients each month, including Tamam and her children. Tahaddi also has a social work team who give extra care and support to Syrian refugees, including trauma counselling, home visits and material assistance. The centre staff show solidarity with the families, as well as love and compassion.



The centre also runs an education programme for 500 children who have missed out on the state-provided school system, including many Syrian children. Without a basic education, these children's potential would be stunted with little hope for the future.

📍 The Tahaddi centre supports Syrian families who have fled conflict

SKILLS FOR LIFE

As well as providing trauma care and education for children, Tahaddi also offers literacy and skills classes for adults. It trains women in sewing, with advanced classes helping women to reach a level where they can earn money from the garments they make. The sewing group is in high demand for its products: they produced more than 2,800 blankets in 2017. But, as Tamam has experienced, the sense of home and community is just as transformational as the new skills and extra income.



FROM SYRIA TO LEBANON

Lebanon is home to a wide range of ethnic groups: it's the most religiously diverse country in the Middle East. Although the country enjoyed economic prosperity in the 1960s, Lebanon was then crippled by a civil war that lasted 15 years. After the conflict ended in 1990, the country has slowly recovered but tensions with nearby countries and political instability continues. The protracted and ongoing conflict in neighbouring Syria has put a huge strain on the country.

The conflict in Syria began early in 2011. Over the past nine years, more than 350,000 people have been confirmed killed with another 200,000 missing presumed dead. At least 6.2 million Syrians are internally displaced, while another 5.7 million have fled to other countries.





LEAVING HOME BEHIND

There are now an estimated 1.5 million Syrians living in Lebanon – making up a quarter of the population. Around three quarters of these Syrians are vulnerable women and children who have fled the conflict at home.

Lebanon bears by far the biggest proportional burden of the Syrian crisis. In response, Tearfund has been working in Lebanon since 2013. Through local partners who share our commitment and values, we have reached out to thousands of Syrian families in Lebanon – offering people support regardless of their race or religion.

Last year Tearfund was given permission to set up an office in Syria for the first time. This is a huge step forward and a real answer to prayer. Now, alongside our work with Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan, we have an amazing opportunity to be there at the start, as communities begin to rebuild.

📷 More than a quarter of the population of Beirut are Syrians sheltering from conflict

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