

## Speaker Webinar Q&A

### **Birungi**

#### **Q: Is Birungi living alone or with her family? How old is Birungi?**

Birungi is 22 and does not have a husband or children. She enjoys her newfound independence which her small business has given her. In the future she will be able to choose if she wants to marry and Birungi will be able to make her husband listen in a place where women are often not treated respectfully. This is a massive change for people like Birungi: she has found her own status in life. She feels she has found her God-given potential and is learning that she is created equal. This is truly an inspiration for the We Won't Stop Campaign: seeing people who believe they are in a hopeless situation being able to realise their potential through the support of their communities.

#### **Q: Has this community been troubled by conflict?**

All communities in DRC have been affected by conflict to an extent. Most recently, this community was affected by long-standing ethnic rivalries which bubbled up into conflict. They have also been impacted by the country-wide conflict; men have been taken away from the community and armed groups come through the village.

#### **Q: Is Birungi literate?**

Yes, Birungi has learnt to read and write. She has also learnt numeracy skills as part of her business and sewing training. This has opened up her opportunities for the future.

#### **Q: Is there any resistance to change in the community and has Birungi faced any challenges because of her success and independence?**

Mindset shift is needed in many communities: some people have a limited view of who we are as part of God's Creation. Part of our Church Community and Mobilisation work is to inform people what God wants us to be. From this, they want the best for themselves and their wider community. There may always be some people who are resistant but on the whole the communities are very open to change.

### **Action Entraide**

#### **Q: How extensive is the work of Action Entraide?**

They focus most of their work in the Ituri province in the North East of DRC. Their main office is in a town called Bunia. They have provided church and community transformation training to many pastors in the area as well as starting a number of initiatives, in particular the skills training centre in Bogoro that Birungi attended. This reflects their commitment to support local young people to gain employment and improve their living conditions through vocational training courses.

The two main areas of training are tailoring and carpentry. These have been chosen because there is a ready market in all villages for such skills, and businesses can be started with fairly limited layout. The school teaches some welding but this requires a source of

power and expensive equipment, which means it is not an easy business to establish. The training focuses on practical skills but also addresses some literacy and numeracy needs, especially relating to equipping the young people to be able to run businesses. For women, this can be life-changing as, without practical skills, literacy and numeracy, they cannot earn income and are more likely to marry young, be abused by their husband and live a life of servitude.

Action Entraide also engages in peace and reconciliation activities for young people through sports and cultural activities, as well as agro-forestry projects, focussing on sustainable agriculture and reforestation.

**Q: How did Action Entraide first come to Tearfund's attention?**

Tearfund has worked in DRC since 1986. Tearfund is connected to local church denominations, even if they are not directly partnered with them. Through discussion with the churches, we hear about particular organisations and churches running projects and we visit them and run checks before formally partnering with them. It is a process built on relationships with churches in country.

**Q: You mentioned a community has started a health clinic. What about trained staff, such as nurses or a community health worker, and drug supplies?**

The community started the clinic themselves, finding the resources within the community themselves to pay for a professional to come and run it, as well as the resources needed to treat people. They are not as highly qualified as a nurse but are able to support women in labour and villagers with illnesses. This has inspired the community to believe in change.

**Q: Does the money from Tearfund go to Action Entraide and then on to the community, or to the community directly?**

Money is sent to Tearfund Country Representatives before being given to partners through grants to ensure accountability for how money is spent by Tearfund partners across the world.

**Q: Is Action Entraide a church based organisation or does it partner with churches as Tearfund does? What role has the local church in this work?**

Action Entraide is a Christian organisation but is not linked to a specific church or denomination. The local church is well placed to reach the most vulnerable and those in need - whether that be through a church network reaching remote villages, or whether that is in urban settings in hard-to-access slums and tower blocks. Tearfund supports Action Entraide in DRC, resourcing them to offer lasting transformation to communities.

The pastor from Birungi's village approached Action Entraide asking them to visit his village and speak to them about community mobilisation. He was then taken through the CCT (Church and Community Transformation) process and the church is moving forward with a number of projects in the community. It was through this connection that Birungi's uncle heard about the skills training centre.

**Q: Does Action Entraide have other partners or just Tearfund?**

Yes, they have had other supporters, but Tearfund is one of the biggest supporters of Action Entraide.

**Q: What is Tearfund's role with Action Entraide?**

Tearfund does fund Action Entraide but the relationship goes much further, working closely together and sharing knowledge. We support them as an organisation in a close partnership. Tearfund rarely has their own team of people in country and usually works through local partners.

**DRC**

**Q: How has climate change affected DRC?**

We have seen climate change affect all the countries Tearfund works in. In DRC there is a high level of rainfall, but climate change has made this rainfall unpredictable which has made it hard for villages to plan.

**Q: What is the main cause of the conflict in DRC?**

It is incredibly complicated. Because it is such a resource rich country, there are many groups and neighbouring countries interested in these resources. Some of these have mobilised armed groups to try and gain control of these resource-rich areas. One of the other factors is the size of the country, which is the size of western Europe. Trying to govern from a capital city which is right on one side of the country, and with very little infrastructure across the country, has led to a lot of instability and difficulties in governing.

**Q: How does Tearfund keep in touch with partners in the DRC, to keep information and support flowing? In there phone or internet connection?**

It is very common for people to have mobile phones in the DRC and across Africa, and work a lot better than landlines. Internet access is also quite widespread, though not of quite as good quality.

**Q: Birungi's community is very remote. How many other small communities are there in the same area?**

There are so many small communities in DRC that have had hardly any exterior support from organisations like Action Entraide. The communities are very thankful that organisations make the effort to go and work with them because they feel so cut off. We are seeing these projects expanding: Birungi's community have felt so touched that they were supported by Action Entraide and have in turn reached out to their neighbouring community, a Pygmy community, to see how they best can support their neighbours.

**Q: How big is the community at Mazanguia? How badly are they affected by men being absent because of conflict or working elsewhere?**

It is similar to a small village in the UK, with a population of high hundreds. However, the geographical area is much larger with a large area for farming. Some of the villages don't have many men around: there are some families where men are absent, but men are very present in the church and community mobilisation work. There were many men who were very supportive of Birungi.

**Q: How fertile is the area?**

The majority of DRC is very fertile, as is Birungi's area. Working through our partners, we have found that the conflict and lack of understanding of the land has been the real obstacle to communities growing crops in a self-sustaining way.

**General**

**Q: Are there some other statistics to show the extent of similar situations in the DRC and beyond?**

Please see the Speaker Pack which contains statistics and facts about DRC. You can also find some more detailed facts from the World Health Organisation on our [FAQ](#) document on Speakers Corner. There are also some statistics in Tear Times: if you didn't receive this, please get in touch with your Speaker Manager, who will be able to send you one.

**Q: How did Tearfund start in 1968, and has its vision and way of working changed over the years? Do we have some statistics of what Tearfund has achieved over the last 50 years?**

Tearfund grew out of the Evangelical Alliance which was working in many areas. George Hoffman decided to set up Tearfund through churches and Christians so that supporters knew that their money was being used well by people with the same beliefs as them, to avoid corruption.

Originally, Tearfund gave money to crises, but increasingly Tearfund has grown to know about their partners and build relationships with them. The values have remained similar in their Christ-centred perspective of relief work. The way the work has been done has become more expert through knowledge of the areas and situations and so have become more sophisticated in how we bring aid and development. Tearfund are now encouraging a whole-life response, not only looking at giving but also in how they can pray and take action in their own life. For more information, please visit our [website](#).

**Q: Can you save other things on the USB?**

Yes, there is a small amount of space to save the talk or a presentation onto.

**Q: How do you want us to use the blank boxes on the poster?**

The posters are for churches to use if they are holding a Tearfund event after your visit. Please do encourage the churches you visit to put these posters up after you leave to remind people in the coming week about your visit and Tearfund's work.