

# One Voice

Your weekly  
prayer resource

The logo for Tearfund, featuring the word "tearfund" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.

## Critical condition: an update on Afghanistan

While the headlines may have moved on from Afghanistan, the reality is that the situation remains critical. Here we share an update from our local partners about how you can be praying for the people of Afghanistan amid the uncertainty.

### Breaking point

The main challenge that people are facing is hunger. There are heartbreaking reports of parents selling their children because they cannot afford to feed them.

This is partly due to bank closures and currency shortages across the country. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has banned the use of foreign currency within the country, which is likely to make the problem even worse.

The severe drought – the worst in more than a decade – means that hoped-for harvests have failed. Many families were relying on these to see them through the coming winter.

### Coronavirus crisis

The other crises that are affecting Afghanistan have overshadowed a growing threat in the country: coronavirus. Cases – and the number of reported deaths – are increasing as the virus is rapidly spreading.

With resources dwindling, more and more people are unable to afford healthcare once they are taken ill.

Hospitals and health centres are also operating at a limited capacity due to the uncertainty in the country. Many healthcare professionals have also fled the country following the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's return to power.

### Reaching out

Some of our local partners have been able to restart their programmes. This work has included reaching hundreds of people with emergency food provisions, as well as sharing accurate information about coronavirus to help slow the spread.

However, there are uncertainties around the new government structure, and so some of the projects remain on hold. It is unclear when these will be able to resume.

Please keep praying for Afghanistan in this time of uncertainty.

### Pray with us

- Pray for people's provision and safety – especially women and girls, who are especially vulnerable. Pray for enough food, clean water, a safe home and opportunities for work.
- Ask God to resolve the currency problems in Afghanistan so that people can have access to the resources they need to flourish. Pray for wisdom for international leaders and policy leaders for how they engage with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on addressing the economic issues.
- Pray for an end to the spread of coronavirus in Afghanistan.

### A note from...

'It is heartbreaking to hear of just some of the crises facing the people of Afghanistan. If I feel overwhelmed and sad, then what must they feel? We must not give up and keep praying for Afghanistan – for people's safety, for their provision and that peace will prevail.'

**Corine Verdoold, Country Director for Afghanistan**

## Pray for the world



There has tragically been no de-escalation of violence between government forces and armed groups in Ethiopia since last week. The conflict has caused massive displacement of people who are at risk of hunger, lack of shelter, abuse and trauma. There are reports of widespread sexual and gender-based violence. Pray for people's safety – especially women and girls – as well as healing and comfort. Pray for an immediate ceasefire and for peace.



In Bangladesh, poorer communities in low-lying areas keep getting pushed further into poverty by the increase in climate-related disasters. Pray for protection for these communities. Ask God for more resources for our local partners to be able to scale up the work they are doing to support them to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change.



Cocoa farmers in Ivory Coast are set to lose one fifth of their income next year due to the price of cocoa beans decreasing. Large chocolate companies are reporting higher profits, but are not paying farmers more for the cocoa. Lift up the work Tearfund's local partners are doing to help farmers join Fairtrade initiatives so they can earn a fair price for their work.

# Disobedience and demonstrations – should Christians take part?

**Throughout COP26, campaigners, communities and faith groups are making their voices heard through public demonstrations and marches. But do demonstrations make any difference? What does the Bible say about them? And what role can they play as we face up to the climate crisis?**

## What exactly is a demonstration?

A demonstration is where a group takes public action for a shared cause or purpose. It is a way that people can use their voices and their collective ‘people power’ to drive conversations on important issues – and ultimately influence policy.

Demonstrations come in many different shapes and sizes, including marches, sit-ins, hunger-strikes and walk-outs. Some of these actions are sometimes grouped together as civil disobedience – a tactic to draw attention to an issue, often when other approaches have failed to bring adequate change.

## Have demonstrations ever achieved anything?

Yes, plenty. Some of the most famous and influential movements towards justice in the 20th century were sparked by protests: for example the American Civil Rights Movement led by Martin Luther King Jr; the liberation of India from colonial power led by Mahatma Gandhi; the fall of the Berlin Wall; and the Women’s Suffrage movement.

Demonstrations are part and parcel of a democratic society – they’re a way to speak about issues we care about, and call on our leaders to represent us well. When faced with an emergency like the climate crisis, demonstrations are a way to ‘raise the alarm’ and spark urgent action.

Sometimes, this kind of alarm-raising can cause temporary disruptions to everyday life. While controversial, this can be part of the process of putting pressure on governments and leaders to make change happen. All of the examples above, and plenty more, involved acts of disruption. Of course, the impact on people’s lives must always be carefully considered, as an ill-advised action can be counter-productive. However, demonstrations are a tactic that people use when they don’t feel heard about an urgent situation.

## What does the Bible say about demonstrating?

The Bible is full of examples of people boldly speaking out and taking action against injustice in order to create change. From Queen Esther lobbying the Persian king to save her people; to the Hebrew prophets risking their lives to protest against political oppression; and, famously, Jesus himself committing an act of civil disobedience by chasing the money-changers from the Temple and turning over their tables. Abraham and Moses even protested against God – and managed to influence God’s decisions (Genesis 18:24-32 and Numbers 14:10-20).

Speaking up and demonstrating is a spiritual act; it is an embodied prayer. There is a clear Biblical mandate to use our voices and actions against injustice, summarised in the command: ‘Speak up for

those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.' (Proverbs 31:8-9).

### **Why are organisations like Tearfund demonstrating at COP26?**

Tearfund staff, as well as local partners and allies, have been in Glasgow throughout COP26. As well as talking with government officials, churches and Christians, they have taken part in a march – a public demonstration – to raise awareness of this issue.

Similar marches were held across the UK – bringing together people to demonstrate the need for world leaders to take urgent action to protect people and the planet.

'We march because... we want justice for the poorest communities and indigenous peoples living in different parts of the world – the families whose lives and homes are being destroyed by extreme weather, droughts and floods,' shares Kuki Rokhum, who works for our local partner EFICOR, in India.

'We want justice for all those who live lightly and yet pay heavily. And we walk in faith that things can change. Together we each carry with us a hope that we will see deeds, not just words, from this COP26 summit.

'The time to act was yesterday, but we still have today.'

### **Pray with us**

Begin by thanking God for people who stand up for justice – for people like Queen Esther, Martin Luther King Jr, and Kuki Rokhum – who defend the rights of others and seek change.

Lift up those who are making their voices heard during the COP26 summit. Pray that world leaders and decision makers will listen and respond through decisive action that will tackle the climate emergency.

As the conference winds down and delegations head home, ask God to keep this issue on the forefront of agenda and remind world leaders of their responsibilities to the people on the frontline of this climate crisis.

End your time in prayer by asking God if there is anything he would like you to do publicly to stand up for others – either in relation to the climate emergency or for other issues of justice and oppression. Leave space to listen to how he responds. This could be through scripture or an image. Do not rush away – take time to have a two-way conversation with God, listening and telling him more of what is on your heart.

End by thanking God for this time together and commit to taking the next step.

# Weaving change in the Philippines

**The coronavirus pandemic has been disastrous for vulnerable communities in the Philippines. Lockdowns cut off the few income opportunities that many people had. But as restrictions begin to ease, our local partner is empowering people to weave a better future.**

During the pandemic, Tearfund and our local partners have been providing food, clean water and public health information to help protect communities. But, just as importantly, we've been working alongside communities to ensure that they can recover and rebuild for the long-run.

After experiencing so much hardship, the last thing these people needed was to just go back to the way things were before: barely earning enough to scrape by.

## An invitation

PhilRads, our local partner in the Philippines, set up four community hubs in Luzon – the country's largest island. These hubs provide people with training to help them set up their own businesses. They also equip them with financial skills and the know-how to be more resilient when future disasters hit. At the end of the training, PhilRads gives them resources to start up their own small business.

PhilRads works alongside local churches to help identify people who will benefit most from this – people who are usually marginalised from society.

'We wanted to make sure that these courses were accessible to everyone,' shares Raymond Kwong, who leads Tearfund's work in East and Southeast Asia. 'We have such a diverse mix now – from single parents to senior citizens to people with additional needs.'

'No one should be excluded from being given the opportunity to learn and to lift themselves out of poverty.'

## Weaving hope

One of the training courses has been teaching people how to weave baskets. Not only is this a way to earn a living, it also provides a sustainable solution to single-use plastics and waste – a huge problem in the area that is harming people's health and the environment.

'The basket weaving is a really innovative way of helping people to recover from the pandemic,' continues Raymond. 'It's providing a solution to an ongoing problem in communities, while giving local people decent work opportunities.'

The name of the group is *Helping Bayong*, meaning 'weave as one to help each other'.

'People have spent months in lockdown, which has been isolating and lonely for most,' concludes Raymond.

‘Helping them to get back on their feet financially is important, but so is reminding them that they don’t have to do this alone. Ensuring that these projects felt like a community – where people can come together and lift each other up – is really important.

‘Please continue to pray for Tearfund and our partners around the world to help people recover from the coronavirus pandemic.’

### Pray with us

Dear God,

With you, nothing is impossible; you can do more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). In light of this truth, we lift up the work Tearfund and its local partners are doing to help communities recover from the coronavirus pandemic. Bless them with wisdom, vision, boldness and resources so that recovery doesn’t mean going back to the way things were before. Lord, give comfort and hope to those who are still struggling from the coronavirus pandemic. We pray for help to reach them soon.

In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

**tearfund.org**

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