

# One Voice in Prayer

Praying together for  
an end to global poverty

tearfund

## Blinded by conflict: survivors share stories of life in Afghanistan

**'I never thought that one day I would become a needy person looking for food,' Feras\*, a father-of-five, told our local partners. He is one of many people whose life has been turned upside down by the conflict in Afghanistan.**

'[Before] I was a good farmer in my village and had a very happy life there,' Feras continues. He had plenty of animals and planted crops, giving him enough food to feed his family all year round.

But conflict changed everything.

'There are many rockets firing and [hitting] our village,' Feras says. 'One day, a bomb hit near to me and blinded me. After that, we moved to the city.'

Feras and his children now struggle to survive after being forced to leave everything behind. He also cannot find work, due to his injuries. And he's not the only one.

Abdul\* also suffered life-changing injuries. 'I lost my eyes in a bomb blast,' he says. 'I consider each part of the body a blessing from God. But without eyes, it is very difficult in Afghanistan to live and survive. Here we don't have any facilities for people with impaired vision.'

'Tearfund's local partners have been able to help people like Feras and Abdul with food and other essentials to help them survive,' shares Corine Verdoold, who leads Tearfund's work in Afghanistan. 'Thank you to everyone who has been faithfully praying that our local partners can reach those in need.'

'[Before] my children were just eating dry bread,' shares Abdul. '[Tearfund's local partners] gave us a good package of food, hygiene items and blankets. It is so helpful to feed the family and also to keep us warm... I will pray for blessings upon you for your kind act.'

Please keep praying for the people of Afghanistan as they are forced to adapt to a new way of living due to the ongoing conflict.

## Pray with us

- Lift up people who have become injured due to the conflict and pray for healing and comfort. Pray that opportunities will be made for people to be able to participate fully in public life, no matter their injuries or disability.
- Pray for provision of food, water and shelter for people who are struggling to survive.
- Ask God to bring peace.

\*Names changed to protect identities

## Bible verse of the week

‘For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ (Matthew 25:35-36)

## Pray for the world



### **Increasing access to Malaria prevention and treatment**

April 25 is World Malaria Day. Although Malaria is preventable and treatable, it continues to kill more than 500,000 people every year. In Africa, more than two thirds of victims are children. Pray for God's blessing on the work being done to eliminate this disease. Pray in particular for health messaging, treatments and resources such as mosquito nets to reach difficult-to-access communities.



### **Supporting traumatised people in Indonesia**

In Jakarta – the capital of Indonesia – Tearfund has been training government staff and volunteers from the Ministry of Social Affairs to help them organise mental health and trauma support in local communities after disasters hit. Praise God for this opportunity; pray for continued good relationships and ways that Tearfund can continue to help advise on initiatives and training that will benefit people living in poverty.



### **Persisting in prayer over Horn of Africa hunger crisis**

Communities across the Horn of Africa – Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya – are facing severe hunger. Three years of failed harvests have had devastating consequences across the region. Pray for urgent food provision for those in need. Ask God to bring the rains where there is drought. And pray for resources for our staff and local partners, so we can reach even more people with support.

# Seven ways to pray for refugees

Refugees are some of the most vulnerable people in the world. Leaving your home – and everything you know and love – is not a decision that anyone makes lightly. People are often desperate, fleeing violence, persecution or disasters, such as floods and cyclones. Even their journeys to find refuge are often marked with danger.

Caring for the vulnerable is at the core of our faith. God is clear that his heart is for the refugee; and calls for us to follow suit.

‘He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing.’ (Deuteronomy 10:18)

Jesus’ message of ‘Do to others as you would have them do to you’ (Luke 6:31) should be at the forefront of our minds. Jesus repeatedly emphasises the attitude we should take to those in need: ‘For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ (Matthew 25:35-36)

As individuals we may not always be able to do anything practical to help – but we can always pray, and prayer is powerful.

## Pray with us

Below are seven ways you can pray for refugees. Why not spend a week in prayer, focusing each day on a different section? Or, if you’re part of a church or small group, you could focus on one section a week to study and reflect on.

After reading each section, reflect on the people mentioned and the stories shared. There is a short prayer at the end of each section to act as a prompt to help begin your prayers. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to continue to pray. You may feel moved to pray for a particular crisis or group of people.

## Pray for safe routes for refugees to take

Refugees are often left traumatised by their journey. This is one of the reasons why Tearfund and our local partners set up trauma support groups in countries where we work that are home to people who have fled violence.

‘One million Rohingya people fled extreme violence in Myanmar – half of them children,’ shares Sanjeev Bhanja, who leads Tearfund’s work in Bangladesh. ‘Many of their homes were torched and the journey to Bangladesh – often taken on foot – was dangerous. Survivors tell of being chased and attacked on the way, as well as being separated from their loved ones. There were also many that were killed during their escape.’

When violence happens, people are left on their own to escape wherever and however they can, not knowing if they’ll survive the journey or find safety and welcome in the countries where they end up.

*Lord, we pray for people right now who are being forced to flee – meet them on the road and protect them and guide them to safety as they travel...*

[Continue with your own prayers here]

### **Pray for provision of food, clean water and a safe home**

Accessing even the most basic essentials for life can be difficult for refugees.

Many refugees end up in settlements. Some of these are camps created for this purpose, other areas – usually slums because it's all refugees can afford – quickly become their home.

These places are often cramped and dangerous. For example, more than 1 million people live in Cox's Bazar refugee camp in Bangladesh, making conditions cramped and dangerous.

Most people's homes there are plastic tarpaulin tents erected on steep, muddy hills – and there's often not even an inch gap between them. Families share limited facilities there too. One toilet will serve more than 20 households, each with five or six members. That's more than one hundred people using one toilet, sometimes more.

'Tearfund and our local partners are doing everything we can to make things safer for refugees and allow them to live with the dignity any human being should have,' shares Sanjeev.

'Our work includes building more shower blocks and toilets in the camps and installing solar lights to make the camps safer.'

*Lord, we pray for provision of regular food, clean water and safe accommodation for refugees. We ask that you bless the homes they come to inhabit – let them be places where they can find peace and joy and build new memories...*

[Continue with your own prayers here]

### **Pray for protection for the most vulnerable**

'Many refugees arrive with nothing but the clothes on their backs,' shares Rosa Camargo Bravo, who oversees Tearfund's work in Latin America and the Caribbean. 'They are immediately vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.'

Many refugees will not be able to afford healthcare. The trauma of fleeing can be particularly dangerous for women who are pregnant. In Colombia, Tearfund is working with a local partner to make maternal healthcare free and accessible for refugees. They also give new mothers a pack with nappies, milk and other essentials once the baby is born.

Genesis, a Venezuelan refugee who lives in Colombia, was turned away by several doctors before Tearfund's local partner was able to help. 'Now that I've had my first check-up I feel good, I feel safer because they are taking care of me. They are monitoring me and my baby. I feel good because everything is well, thank God,' she tells us.

*Lord, we pray for protection over people who are especially vulnerable, protect them from exploitation and abuse...*

[Continue with your own prayers here]

You may want to spend some time reflecting on the different challenges these groups face and pray for their needs:

- People with disabilities
- Pregnant women and new mothers
- People with mobility issues
- The elderly
- Women and girls
- Unaccompanied children – those who have become separated from their families or orphaned

### **Pray that refugees will be welcomed**

Many refugees around the world are still met with hostility, suspicion and fear when they cross borders and arrive in different countries.

Attitudes like this make it difficult for refugees to settle into communities and find friendship. Many can also be put off accessing public support, such as healthcare, administrative offices or libraries, because they may fear hostility or are met with prejudice.

Imane\* fled conflict in Syria with her husband and four young children. But they didn't find an immediate welcome when they arrived in Lebanon.

'We found safety here, but life has always been hard for us,' shares Imane. 'When we first came here, all the Lebanese we would meet would tell us to go back to our country, as if we were happy that we had to flee our lives and be separated from our loved ones.'

But then the support of a Lebanese neighbour transformed things for the whole family, helping them settle into the community.

'We couldn't take anything with us [when we fled],' Imane continues. 'My baby daughter didn't even have a mattress to sleep on. Little by little, our Lebanese neighbours helped us with as many house supplies as they could, thank God for them!'

*Lord, we pray for people to find welcome on route and in the places where they flee. We pray for an outpouring of hospitality and for every refugee to feel accepted and loved...*

[Continue with your own prayers here]

### **Pray for opportunities for refugees**

Life in refugee camps and settlements can be extremely dull. Finding opportunities for work can be difficult. In many countries, there are laws which state that refugees cannot work. This makes it harder for them to provide for their families, as well as find ways to meet people and fill their days.

In Lebanon, Tearfund works with the Tahaddi centre – an education and healthcare centre located in an area where many Syrian refugees live. One of the courses they run is a sewing workshop. This provides women with community and friendship, as well as a trade for them to earn a living.

When Tamam, a Syrian refugee, joined the sewing programme it gave her hope for the future.

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

‘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.’

*Lord, we pray for opportunities for refugees in the countries where they end up. We pray that these opportunities will help them to find community and friendship...*

[Continue with your own prayers here]

### **Pray for the local church to advocate for and help refugees**

The church can play a vital role in welcoming refugees, providing them with practical help, as well as advocating for their rights and needs. Around the world Tearfund is working with local church leaders to equip them with how they can do this.

‘[This training] has allowed me to see that the church is not only about preaching the gospel but also addressing the social issues people face,’ says Pastor José Licona, from San Juan de Urabá in Colombia.

‘The unconditional support we have had [from Tearfund] has allowed us today to look at the world from another perspective, it allows us to better organise ourselves to serve the people who really need it.’

In Colombia, the difference the church is making since taking up the plight of refugees has been amazing. Advocacy by coalitions of churches and migrant organisations – through Tearfund’s *As Born Among Us* campaign – has led to more than 24,000 children being granted Colombian nationality. This gives children the rights to healthcare and school among other things – setting them up for a better future.

‘It is the first support that I found here in Colombia for migrants like us,’ says Julie, who fled Venezuela. ‘When I arrived at the church I found the peace that I previously did not have... when I got to the church I saw that it was like my family. I arrive and they hug me, I leave and they hug me. It really has made me think about changing my life.’

*Lord, we pray that your church will be a refuge for all who need it. Give them wisdom and courage to speak out...*

[Continue with your own prayers here]

### **Pray that a safe way home will be made possible**

Many refugees long to return home, but this often isn't possible because they would be in immediate danger upon returning.

While many of our prayers for refugees are about meeting their needs in the short term, we must also pray about the crises that caused them to become refugees in the first place.

This includes praying for peaceful solutions to crises, and for justice over crimes committed against groups of people.

'In the Rohingya refugee camps, there is a sense of time standing still,' explains Sanjeev. 'This is because Rohingya refugees have nowhere else to go. They are desperate to return home – to the lives they had in Myanmar, but since the military coup this is looking even more uncertain.'

'We pray for better days – for this crisis to be over,' shares Ahmad, a Syrian refugee in Lebanon. 'I want my children to continue studying so that they do not have to go through what I went through. I want them to be educated and find stable jobs.'

*Lord, we pray for those who currently feel without hope because of their situation. We pray in your name that you will make a way for them to safely return home and to rebuild their lives...*

[Continue with your own prayers here]

**tearfund.org**

100 Church Road, Teddington TW11 8QE

T 020 3906 3906 E [info@tearfund.org](mailto:info@tearfund.org)

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