

One Voice in Prayer

*Praying together for
an end to global poverty*

tearfund

Local church is saving lives as deadly floods strike Brazil

Local churches have been leading the response after the worst flooding in a generation caused devastating mudslides.

On 28 May, extreme rainfall hit the state of Pernambuco, north-east Brazil. Rivers, streams and canals quickly overflowed, flooding surrounding neighbourhoods. And then the ground began to fall away. The rains triggered mudslides, wiping out many of the poorer communities that are built on hillsides. At least 129 people were killed, and more than 9,000 people were made homeless.

Tearfund has been partnering with Coqueiral Baptist Church in the region for 16 years. Flooding has long been an issue with the Tejipió River, and for years the church has been training groups in how to prepare for and respond to emergencies like this.

As soon as it became clear that a huge disaster was unfolding, these groups swung into action to get people to safety – even before firefighters managed to reach the affected areas. Although the work has been difficult, with many streets and alleys inaccessible, these groups have saved more than 400 lives.

‘We want to support at least 2,000 families,’ says Pastor José, who leads the church. ‘The situation here is very difficult. I’m not even able to think about tomorrow, I am just thinking about today. How we will respond this morning, how we will respond this afternoon. Because the situation is still an emergency. We are assisting families who have lost everything they had.’

So far, 12,000 meals have been distributed, along with more than 1,569 cleaning kits and two tons of clothing. Through the Brazilian Evangelical Alliance, Tearfund is planning to support 80 further churches in Pernambuco like Pastor José’s.

The response from the church has been extraordinary, but the situation remains dangerous. The rains have continued to fall throughout the week. Please join us in prayer for the people of Pernambuco.

Pray with us

'This was the first time in my whole life that I prayed to the Lord to cease the rains and for the strong sun to reach our homes, dry our tears, warm our hearts and bring us hope for a different tomorrow,' says Alberto Lins, who helps lead Tearfund's work with churches in Brazil.

Add your own prayers to Alberto's, asking for an end to the rain, for the sun to dry up the floodwaters, and for new hope to come. Pray for comfort for people who have lost everything. And pray for people like Pastor José, who are working around the clock to bring relief to those in need.

Bible verse of the week

'Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.' (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Pray for the world



Dozens killed in Nigeria church attack

Last Sunday, an armed group attacked worshippers during mass at Saint Francis Catholic Church in southwest Nigeria. They used explosives and shot down those who were trying to flee. Pray for Christ's light to shine amid this darkness. Ask God to comfort those who are grieving and traumatised. And pray for an end to the horrific targeted killing of people of faith in Nigeria.



Upcoming peace rally in the Democratic Republic of Congo

On Saturday in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tearfund is hosting a public peace rally. This will feature former child soldiers, survivors of conflict, and church leaders who will ask local leaders to support peacebuilding and rehabilitation programmes in the country. Pray that churches, the military government and local authorities will show up and be re-envisioned and committed to work for peace.



Praying for an end to child labour

In the world's poorest countries, slightly more than one in five children are trapped in child labour. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, many children end up working long hours in mines, or in other hazardous work, and they miss out on school. Lift up the work Tearfund is doing to help people start their own businesses so they can lift their families out of poverty and are no longer forced to send their children to work.

How to pray for the Horn of Africa hunger crisis

Why so many people are going hungry in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Somalia, what Tearfund is doing and how you can pray.

It has been estimated that in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, a human life is lost every 48 seconds due to lack of food. The region is facing a catastrophic hunger crisis – with between 15 and 20 million people suffering from hunger. The time to act is now. Will you pray with us?

Praying for a crisis this vast can feel overwhelming, but prayer is part of the solution. We believe that God is powerful and in joining with him there will be breakthroughs beyond our expectations and dreams.

This prayer guide for the Horn of Africa is divided into three sections: the first giving you an overview of what is happening and how Tearfund is responding. The second suggests what to pray for and the third provides different creative prayer ideas for you and your church, group or family to use.

What is happening – and how is Tearfund responding?

Hunger crisis

‘All we know is hunger,’ Akina* aged 12 from Uganda, tells us. ‘When we sleep our stomachs are growling because we have not eaten for days.’

The climate crisis has changed weather patterns in the region – the United Nations has warned that the March to May 2022 rainy season is likely to have been the driest on record. With four successive years now of failed rains, food is scarce and another harvest has withered away.

People are forced to rely on expensive food imports, but the war in Ukraine has led to prices skyrocketing even further. In Ethiopia, the price of cooking oil has almost doubled since the Ukraine conflict began. And with wheat imports being blocked, supplies of essentials are running low.

Water crisis

The lack of rains have led to water shortages across the region. As water sources dry up, communities are forced to travel even further to collect water – which is often dirty, but they have no other choice.

‘Water to drink is too far [to collect] so any water we have in the home we have to use it sparingly,’ shares Namazzi*, aged 14 from Uganda.

Water is so scarce in some areas that it is transported by water merchants at a price and most people cannot afford it. Communities are forced to make tough decisions, such as to use the water to drink or to wash themselves with.

The lack of water has also led to livestock perishing. In Ethiopia, more than 1.5 million farm animals, which families relied on for food and income, have died. This has pushed even more people into poverty.

Children missing out on school

Children are bearing the brunt of this crisis – their opportunities for the future are being taken away.

With families being pushed further into poverty, school fees are a luxury many can no longer afford. And even if they could, children are often forced to miss classes due to collecting water or because they are too tired from hunger to make the journey there.

‘I would like to be in school, but the school is so far and I am always hungry, so it is difficult to walk there,’ Namazzi tells us. ‘I really like school, but there is nothing much I can do.’

‘Fetching water usually falls to women and girls,’ says Stewart Muchapera, from our Eastern Africa team. ‘This means girls are missing out on education as they now need to walk miles to collect water. The routes can be unsafe too, with women and girls sometimes attacked as they carry out these essential journeys.’

Dramatic increase of child marriage

Ethiopia has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, with an estimated 40 per cent of girls marrying before the age of 18. And in areas experiencing extended periods of drought – a symptom of the climate crisis – there has recently been a dramatic increase in girls being forced to marry while they are still children.

‘In these desperate circumstances, families may resort to marrying their daughters off to wealthier families,’ says Simba Nyamarezi, who oversees Tearfund’s work in Ethiopia. ‘They sometimes believe that their daughters will have better chances of survival this way, and they can also use the money from the daughter’s dowry to feed their other children.’

Drought and flash flooding

Prolonged drought is wreaking havoc across the region. For rural communities, who rely on farming, the drought has made their way of life impossible.

It is also having a devastating effect on the land itself. Without regular rainfall, the land becomes dry. This means when the rains do come, the land can no longer absorb the rain like it used to. This leads to flash flooding – as the water has nowhere to go. Homes and what little crops or cattle are left are soon washed away.

Refugees and displaced people

With food and water scarce and the harvests failing, more and more people are forced to leave their homes and move elsewhere in the hope they can find food, work and refuge.

The people who leave are often exploited for cheap labour. And with the entire region suffering from the effects of the drought, it’s not a crisis many can escape from.

Those who are left behind in communities are often vulnerable and are forced to rely on begging or handouts from their neighbours to survive.

People like James*, an orphan from Karamoja – one of the poorest and driest regions of Uganda. His brother, his last remaining relative, was forced to leave so he could try and find work elsewhere.

‘Even the water I use for drinking comes as a donation because here we buy water and the nearest water point is about ten kilometres [six miles],’ says James. ‘Even if I was not blind, with these swollen feet I can’t even get far.’

How is Tearfund responding?

Tearfund and our local partners are working in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda to tackle this crisis. Tearfund Netherlands – who is part of the wider Tearfund family – is working in Somalia.

Some of the things we are doing are:

- Providing emergency food relief to communities suffering from hunger.
- Building wells in drought-affected areas.
- Providing solar-powered water pumps to help provide communities with greater access to drinking water.
- Working with faith and community leaders to raise awareness of the harms of child marriage.
- Supporting people in self-help groups – these are set up through our church partners to help people lift themselves out of poverty. We’ve been able to help people acquire land for tree planting and farming, access affordable loans and have distributed fuel-saving stoves, to help them save money.
- Meeting with UK MPs so they better understand the challenges facing the region, understand what Tearfund and the local church is doing, and the crucial part they can play in alleviating the crisis through committing urgent funding.
- Training farmers with new techniques so they can adapt to the changing weather. In Ethiopia, more than 10,000 farmers are practising this new way of farming.

The need is so great though – this year the Horn of Africa is expected to experience the worst famine in 40 years in the Horn of Africa. Our resources are stretched like never before.

What to pray for...

There are four areas we can focus our prayers on: for people affected by hunger and water shortages; for those in leadership positions; for God’s provision and love to be revealed through the church; and for peace.

Pray for people affected by hunger and water shortages

- Pray for provision of nourishing food and clean water for those in need.

- Pray for healing for those who are suffering from malnutrition and hunger. Pray that they will feel God's love and comfort surrounding them. Pray that there will be no long-term side effects or medical conditions due to hunger.
- Ask God to bring the rainfall that is needed to parts of Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. Pray that this will lead to abundant harvests and for water sources to spring up again closer to communities.

Pray for world leaders to commit funding and action to tackle the hunger crisis

- Pray that food and fuel prices will stabilise, and that provision will be made for countries in a vulnerable position.
- Pray that the UK Government will urgently commit £750 million for humanitarian and development work in the region. Ask God to convict the UK Government to use their influence to persuade other rich countries to commit funding and aid.

Pray for the church

- Pray for the church in the UK to speak out against the injustice of the hunger crisis and for it to use its influence to persuade the UK Government to take action.
- Pray that God's power will be revealed through the church across the Horn of Africa – that it will bring a message of hope amid the suffering.
- Pray that the church in the Horn of Africa will be resourced to serve those who are suffering. Pray for church leaders – who are often suffering the effects of hunger themselves. Ask God to strengthen and protect them as they live out God's call to care for people in need.

Pray for restored relationships and for peace

- The shortages of resources, including food, is making conflict worse in Ethiopia and leading to renewed conflict in other places. Pray for people's safety and for peace to reign.
- Pray for families who have been forced to separate due to this crisis; ask that they will be safely reunited and for God to restore their relationships with each other.
- Pray for protection for girls at risk of child marriage. Ask that they will be able to continue their education and that they will be valued as God's precious daughters by their communities.

Ways to pray...

Go on a prayer walk

Getting outside and going for a walk can give you a new perspective, and the things you come across during your walk can also prompt and guide your prayers. If you or anyone in your group struggles with walking, you may want to choose a location, such as a park, that has benches so that everyone can join in.

Stop and spend some time enjoying the nature around you. If you brought a camera with you, try to find something new or unusual to capture. Praise God for his wonderful creation. Focus on the

weather, plants and the conditions they need to grow and flourish. If you can, listen to a worship song as you do this.

Lament for the ways in which we have destroyed and damaged our world instead of protecting it, and the impact that is having on some of the world's poorest people – such as those in the Horn of Africa. Pray for people who are suffering due to the effects of the climate crisis. Ask God what you can do to make a difference.

Pray using a map

If you have access to a map of the Horn of Africa from an atlas or online, invite the Holy Spirit to reveal a particular location to you. This could be a particular town or country in the Horn of Africa.

Once you have chosen somewhere, lay your hand above it on the map. Pray for that location and the people there. Ask God to reveal specific things you can pray for, or use prayer points in this guide to help.

If doing this activity as a group, you could take it in turns to choose a location to pray over.

You can right click on the image of the map, save it to your computer and print it off. You can then keep it up as a reminder to pray for the Horn of Africa during your week.

Write a psalm

The Psalms are full of prayers and songs of lament: of pain and hurt. Of crying out to God in the dark of the night, wondering if the sun will ever rise again. They can help us to verbalise our disappointment, desperation and anger at the world around us – such as the injustice that so many people are going hungry right now in the Horn of Africa. David, who wrote many of the Psalms, even voiced his anger at God himself (Psalm 13, Psalm 79).

Begin by reading some of the Psalms to help you find the words to bring to God (Psalm 130). Then, write your own psalm of lament to God over this crisis. Ask God to move in power to help end this crisis.

Thank you

Thank you for joining us in prayer for the Horn of Africa. Let's continue to pray and act together on behalf of people suffering from hunger.

*Names changed to protect identities

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