

ONE VOICE

TOGETHER IN PRAYER FOR AN **END TO POVERTY**

ANOTHER DAY IN THE WAR ZONE

Amira* felt like her whole world was falling apart. She'd been a pharmacist in a rural hospital in north-western Yemen for two years – working without payment, but determined to save lives.

She only had simple equipment and medications, and staff numbers were low because salaries weren't able to be paid. Volunteering in a war zone, in a location vulnerable to bombings, only appeals to the most determined.

After three years of conflict, the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen continues. Over 22 million people need aid and 8.4 million people are at risk of famine.

It has been labelled the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Tearfund partners are working in this challenging context, and will continue to be there long-term.

An ongoing diphtheria outbreak has infected over 1,300 people, 80% of them children. Meanwhile cholera is still proving a big threat. Despite rates of infection falling since the end of 2017, when the number of cases surpassed one million, a new outbreak is looming due to poor water and sanitation provisions.

Feeling helpless

Amira was motivated to pursue her work despite such circumstances. She'd enjoyed studying pharmacology at university and was desperate to help those in need.

During the height of the cholera crisis 90 new cases of cholera came to the wards of her hospital in just one day. The drug store was empty and so many of the patients died. Amira felt helpless.

For days the situation didn't improve and she lost the last glimmer of enthusiasm. It left her feeling she had no option but to quit and leave the hospital.

The turnaround

At the same time a Tearfund partner organisation began providing the hospital with more medications for cholera, and special beds for treating patients.

They started training staff in how to deal with cholera cases urgently and efficiently, and began a community awareness programme to help people avoid getting infected. There were also funds to pay salaries for all the staff, which encouraged people to stay.

Amira now had a fresh urgency to her work and an expanded role, helping medical staff receiving and treating the cholera cases and contributing to the awareness campaign.

'I can't find words to describe my happiness when saving a life of a person, and bringing new hope to families. I am grateful to Tearfund's partner,' says Amira.

PRAYER FOCUS:

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- Pray for Amira and other health workers who daily risk their lives to help those who are sick.
- Pray for peace in Yemen and that its people can have their hope restored.
- Thank God for Tearfund's partner organisations, who are able to help in the most challenging circumstances.

A NOTE FROM...

'Although the number of cholera cases has decreased significantly since last year, a fresh outbreak remains a threat, as many people still require basic sanitation and the rainy season will start soon. I am so thankful for the commitment of Yemeni staff and volunteers, who are providing aid in the midst of incredibly challenging circumstances.'

Megan Howe, Programme Officer, Yemen

**Name has been changed to protect identity*

FIFTY YEARS, FIFTY COUNTRIES: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

To mark 50 years of Tearfund, we're sharing about 50 countries where we've worked, celebrating God's provision and power to transform, and praying for each of these nations. This week we're in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Tearfund has been working in the DRC since 1986. Located in central Africa, this country has suffered decades of civil war, with 13 million people currently in need of humanitarian aid.

At Tearfund, we know that broken relationships are the root cause of poverty. In few places is this more evident than in the DRC, where a devastating cycle of conflict has forced more than 4.5 million people from their homes. Deep rifts have formed between different ethnic

groups and communities, and violence has become deeply ingrained in society. For this reason, addressing violence is one of our top priorities in the DRC.

A new solution to an old problem

Women are most vulnerable to violence here; both in conflict, with rape used as a weapon of war, and in the home. Much of our work is to help women recover from violence, grow in confidence and build safe lives for themselves and their children. However, over the years, we've learnt the power of going deeper to tackle violence at its root, by addressing harmful gender norms and working with the men too. And out of that learning has come a new approach: Transforming Masculinities.

Bura's family is one of many in the DRC and around the world to benefit from this work. Like so many men in the DRC, Bura grew up with violence all around him, and was taught that men should not show their emotions or talk about their feelings. This suppression and resulting frustration often emerges through violence, usually towards women, and conflict.

Bura was challenged and changed through Tearfund's Transforming Masculinities workshops, where his group studied the Bible, discussed, reflected and learnt together. He now sees his wife as an equal partner, to be cared for and treated with respect. And together, they are an example and a source of advice to others. Bura has been appointed a Gender Champion by our local partner.

'Before, the situation was not good, even in my own home,' says Bura. 'When I attended the training it changed our behaviour.... Physical violence decreased in the community and it has become rare. If there is a risk of conflict, people avoid resorting to violence to solve their problem.'

It doesn't stop there

Tackling violence isn't the only focus for our staff and partners in the DRC, and we are seeing transformation across a range of issues. Our programmes also cover water and sanitation, creating livelihoods and equipping churches to be agents of powerful change. Please cover this work, and the DRC, in prayer.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Violence continues to wreak devastation in some parts of the DRC, with the north-eastern province of Ituri particularly affected right now. Please pray for those suffering, for our staff and partners there, and for lasting peace in the DRC.
- Give thanks for the lives touched through the work of our staff and partners in the DRC since 1986, and pray for those who still need to be reached.
- The Transforming Masculinities approach to tackling violence is relatively new. Please pray that it will continue to have a powerful impact in the DRC, and further afield as it is introduced in Liberia, Nigeria, Myanmar, Iraq, Brazil and Central African Republic.

THE X FACTOR

Ask anybody at Tearfund what's special about what we do, and the words 'local church' will quickly crop up. For all of our 50 years, we have been clear that we are a Christian charity. But why are we so keen to work with local churches, wherever we can around the world?

The short answer is that churches deliver the 'X' factor. It's a unique, cross-shaped role that makes all the difference (and often with better singing too!) Here are seven reasons why Tearfund and local churches, together, are a heavenly combination.

CHURCHES: RENEWING THE PLACES OTHER ORGANISATIONS CAN'T REACH

When other organisations can't (or just don't) go to the most remote areas – places where there's often the worst poverty – you'll often find the church filling the gap. When all the international aid organisations had to leave one state in South Sudan due to a security threat, local church leaders continued working in their own communities, largely unhindered. As one local pastor explained, 'International NGOs can't travel to that area, but priests have no problem because they just stay with the people...'

CHURCHES CAN RESPOND QUICKLY

When a disaster strikes, it's vital to respond quickly, to save as many lives as possible – a rapid response can make all the difference in saving people's lives. So, when Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar in 2008, our church partners were ready and able to distribute aid straight after it struck and in the greatest areas of devastation. Foreign aid workers didn't arrive until several weeks later, due to the logistics of responding to a major disaster affecting some very remote areas.

CHURCHES GET THAT WE ARE SPIRITUAL BEINGS

Poverty is so much more than 'not enough food' or 'not enough money'. It's got physical, emotional, social and spiritual causes... and solutions. The church gets that we are more than physical beings, we are spiritual beings, made in the image of God, and they see how poverty lowers self-esteem and robs people of their dignity. So it is in the business of 'whole person solutions' – addressing people's mental and spiritual needs, along with their immediate physical needs... just like Tearfund itself.

CHURCHES GET PEOPLE PRACTICING WHAT THEY PREACH

The church can provide an army of willing local volunteers for development and disaster work, meaning the response they give is great value for money. Churches are able to motivate and mobilise their congregations and wider communities by highlighting the Bible's call to care for others – this is particularly important in less secular parts of the world.

CHURCHES INSPIRE CHANGE

Churches are deeply embedded in societies and have the trust and respect of their communities. This privileged position allows church leaders to speak out... and to be heard. They can talk about sensitive issues, even ancient traditions such as Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting, and, where appropriate, use biblical and Christian teaching to encourage people to change. During the recent Ebola pandemic, church and faith leaders

played a pivotal role educating communities in how to stop the virus spreading further. A UN staff member in Sierra Leone commented that ‘the participation of religious leaders was a game changer’.

THE CHURCH IS GLOBAL AND LOCAL

The church is perhaps the largest civil society network in the world. It has its roots deep in the local community, but it can often make its voice heard at the very highest levels, too. The church can advocate for justice and compassion, to governments and heads of state – even at international level. Around the world, the church occupies a rare position of influence and trust, and can make itself heard in places that an international NGO alone couldn’t access.

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

✓ The UN Refugee Agency says that more than 100,000 Rohingya refugees are at risk from landslides and floods in the upcoming monsoon season. The rains typically begin in April and peak in July. Please pray that solutions will be found for this potential crisis, and that all who are vulnerable will be protected

✓ In Nigeria, there continue to be violent clashes between government forces and insurgency groups. Please pray for peace; for the release of girls who have been kidnapped; and for the work of Tearfund's partners, who are rebuilding the livelihoods of people who have lost their homes.

✓ There are still areas of Eastern Ghouta, Syria, where civilians have been unable to evacuate. The bombings are causing huge damage and loss of life, and humanitarian agencies are struggling to reach people in need. Pray for peace, and for safe access both for civilians trying to get out, and agencies trying to get in. *Please do not share this online.*