

# ONE VOICE

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

## **FIGHTING LEAVES 400,000 CHILDREN HUNGRY IN DRC**

**Eruptions of violence are devastating communities in various parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).**

The latest fighting in the Kasai region has left three million people without enough to eat – including 400,000 children. Clashes between the army and rebel groups has meant farmers have been unable to plant crops for several years.

In recent weeks, violence has broken out between Lendu and Hema communities in the north eastern Ituri province. Villages have been attacked and burned, with many women and children killed. Tearfund's partner in the province has said that 25,000 have fled their homes without anything, leaving behind their food supplies, household goods, fields and livelihoods.

In total seven million people are in need of humanitarian support across the DRC. Tearfund and our partners are there, working with those in greatest need.

### **Political pressure**

It has been two years since the latest term of President Joseph Kabila ended in 2016. The country is still to hold a subsequent presidential election; the planned 2017 elections did not materialise and it won't be until 23 December 2018 that the people go to the polls again.

An accord had been brokered by the Church over a year ago stipulating that Kabila could remain in power provided new elections were held in 2017. The deal fell through but the Catholic Church has remained determined, supporting marches on 31 December 2017 and 21 January, both of which were heavily repressed.

According to the AFP news agency, the DRC's main opposition party, the UDPS, is set to join a march on 25 February backed by the Catholic Church to demand Kabila's resignation.

### **Presence and impact**

Tearfund has been present in the DRC since 1986 working through partner organisations, and since 2001 our own staff have been involved in practical response work.

With the ongoing crisis we have been distributing much-needed food supplies, helping to provide clean water, and training in farming skills and other ways to make a livelihood.

With the renewed violence in Ituri our partner, Action Entraide, is planning an immediate response to provide food and other items essential for the safe collection of water, safe hygiene practices, and the preparation of food, to around 9,000 people.

Tearfund's Country Director for the DRC, David McAllister, says: 'It is absolutely heartbreaking and rips one apart emotionally to witness, almost on a daily basis, the barbarity of the attacks on the innocents and the continuous suffering of millions here in DRC.

'I am overwhelmed and almost broken as I see the great need as we try our best to bring some kind of life saving assistance. Yet, with our faithful, committed and dedicated partners here in DRC, and with our team of Tearfund staff and in the knowledge that so many of the Lord's people are praying and supporting, we press on and continue to give that cup of water in the Master's Name.'

**PLEASE PRAY:**

- Please pray for a calming of violence across the DRC and pray that affected communities would not enter a cycle of retaliation and revenge.
- Please pray for all those who are suffering and caught up in the violence.
- Ask God to protect our team and partners in DRC as they work in these difficult circumstances.

**A NOTE FROM...**

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## **FIFTY YEARS, FIFTY COUNTRIES: BURUNDI**

*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 Brazil.*

**Burundi at a glance:**

- 42% of the national income comes from foreign aid
- 17 is the median age, and about 46% of the population are 14 years of age or younger
- 90% of the population are employed in agriculture and are reliant on good harvests
- 16,000 babies die each year – one of the highest infant mortality rates in Africa

**Burundi, in East Africa, is one of the poorest nations in the world. The mostly rural population are almost entirely reliant on agriculture for their income.**

However, over-exploitation of the land has resulted in soil infertility, leading to widespread food shortages. Climate change and political instability have only made the situation worse, with many families fleeing to neighbouring countries. This is what led to Beni\* being abandoned.

### **An act of desperation**

Beni was just a baby when his parents abandoned him. Poverty had forced their hand – they simply didn't have enough food or money to care for him.

His father was forced to look for work in Tanzania, while his mother decided to move to the capital city, Bujumbura. Neither of them felt as though they could take care of him any more.

If it weren't for the compassion of another family, and the help of the local church, it's unlikely that Beni would have survived.

### **Adopted into new life**

Dangerously malnourished, Beni arrived at the doorstep of the Bukuru\* family. They adopted him, but it wasn't plain sailing – the family themselves were struggling to find enough food.

The local church was on hand to help. Tearfund have been helping churches in the region to set up and run feeding centres. The family brought Beni to the church to be screened, and he was immediately admitted to the feeding center.

Cynthia\*, Beni's new adoptive mother, describes the severity of the situation: 'When we received Beni into our family, he was about to die. However, after two months at the feeding centre you can see how well he is. Now he has strength and joy. He plays with the other children.'

### **Emergency rescue**

The main focus of the feeding programme is to help children under five years, pregnant women and lactating mothers affected by malnutrition. As well as providing fortified foods, our church partners are working hard to provide education on a wide range of health issues, such as safe water and sanitation, malaria, worms, and HIV and AIDS.

'I thank Tearfund, which has enabled the church to bring this programme here,' says Cynthia. 'We now know how to feed Beni with a balanced diet to address malnutrition issues. We'd love for Tearfund to continue spreading this wonderful programme in other areas and rescue people suffering from hunger.'

To help ensure long-term food security, our partners are also providing improved soya and peanut seeds to plant in the farms and kitchen gardens that we've helped to establish. The church has also started running savings groups, which will help protect people like the Tharcisse family from future instability.

## PRAY FOR THE WORK:

- Pray for peace and restoration, so that Burundi can begin to function in unity.
- Pray for God's wisdom and provision in a country where food security remains a challenge. Lift up those who are struggling to make a living and pray that God will provide for their needs.
- Give thanks for our staff and partners, who are working hard to ensure life-saving relief can reach those most in need.

*\*Names changed to protect identities*

## **THE TENACITY OF A DREAM**

**Last August Nepal experienced some of the heaviest rainfall in many years, causing devastating flooding and landslides across 35 districts. Banke was one of the worst hit districts, with nearly 10,000 households affected and many homes and livelihoods destroyed.**

Ram Lautan Tharu\* (60) lives in the district with his family, including his wife, two sons and their children. He depends solely on farming for his and his family's livelihood.

'At around three o'clock in the morning I woke up and felt that my bedding was wet. To my surprise I looked around the room and realised flood water had entered our home and the water level had reached up to my bed,' he remembers. Quickly waking the other members of his family, they fled their home with very few belongings.

### **Shelter in a cow shed**

They spent the rest of the night sheltering in their animal shed, which was on slightly higher ground. The next morning, they woke to find their house had been completely washed away.

The flood water had also destroyed the family's savings, washing away stores of wheat, lentils and rice, as well as their goat and ox. In just one night Ram and his family had lost everything they had.

'All of my dreams were swept away by the river,' he said. 'We feel hopeless. Even a small contribution would mean so much for us to recover from the effects of this disaster.'

In the immediate aftermath of the flooding, the family received a distribution of ready-to-eat food from Nepal Red Cross Society. Other agencies, including Tearfund's long-term partner, International Nepal Fellowship (INF), were also responding. INF provided assistance through the distribution of relief packages to 625 households.

### **Rebuilding hope**

However, after the initial response, INF began to explore how best to help people rebuild their livelihoods and move back into permanent shelter.

Ram and his family continued to shelter in the upper floor of their animal shed. But now they have a chance to rebuild their lives. Tearfund and INF are working together to provide the family with a transitional shelter and the agricultural tools and seeds needed to establish their livelihoods.

Individuals are being trained in how to design flood resistant shelters with a raised platform and a stronger internal structure, which will not be washed away should another flood come. Additional training in home garden management, integrated pest management, and agricultural methods will also help them overcome the impact of flooding.


Now Ram and his family are free to dream again – they look forward to moving out of the animal shed and to harvesting a healthy crop once more.


**PLEASE PRAY:**


- Pray for communities across Nepal still coming to terms with the loss of loved ones, homes and livelihoods and pray that every household can access the help they need to rebuild.
- Pray for the ongoing work of Tearfund and our partners, especially the training that will enable communities to be in a better position to overcome flooding in the future.
- Pray for wisdom for the government and regional authorities as they grapple with this ongoing challenge.

*\* Names have been changed to protect identities*

## **PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

 Recent airstrikes on eastern Ghouta have led to the deaths of children and horrific injuries for many others. Please pray for a lasting peace agreement to be found that will bring a swift end to the conflict in Syria. Pray for protection over children and all others caught up in the brutality of this war. And please lift up in prayer Tearfund's partners in Lebanon as they work tirelessly to meet the needs of those fleeing across the border from Syria. (Please do not share this prayer point online.)

 Tearfund has been deeply saddened and disturbed by the recent news stories of abuse perpetrated by aid workers. We are highly committed to the safeguarding and protection of all our beneficiaries, partners and staff. Please pray for all people around the world who have suffered harassment or abuse. Pray that vulnerable people will continue to receive the help and support they desperately need.

 Praise God for the recent event Tearfund organised in Nigeria to celebrate the successes of the church over the last 50 years and look at how the church can have a greater impact in the years to come. Thank God that younger and older generations are joining together to share wisdom and knowledge.

