



FROM CRIMINAL TO COMMUNITY LEADER

Despite an abundance of natural resources, including gold, Papua New Guinea (PNG) suffers from an incredibly high youth unemployment rate and one of the highest crime rates in the world – hardly the island paradise one thinks of in the South Pacific.

Osimo grew up as part of a family of 11 in a small village called Munum, near Lae on the east coast of PNG. He dropped out of school because his parents, who were farmers, couldn't afford to pay his school fees. Like many young people from poor communities, he had little hope for the future and quickly resorted to crime to earn enough money to live.

'When I dropped out of school I started selling drugs and stealing cars – I had no hope for a better future,' he explains. 'One day I was part of a group of boys who murdered a man in a nearby community. Eventually the police caught me stealing a car. They put me in prison and beat me up, knocking out my teeth.'

A turnaround

While he was in prison, Osimo met a pastor from the Salvation Army who told him about Jesus and he became a Christian. When he was released, the pastor put him in touch with Ola Fou, a Tearfund partner running a youth development programme.

'When I left prison, I met Robin, a youth leader from Ola Fou, who told me about their training programme and offered me a place on the course,' says Osimo. 'But in order to attend the training course, I needed to get a passport to travel to the Solomon Islands and Fiji.'

This seemed a big obstacle, but, with Robin's encouragement and help, Osimo raised the money for his passport by selling dried coconut at the market.

Ola Fou's YLD4R (Youth Leadership Development for Resilience) programme aims to give young people the leadership skills they need to transform their communities, as well as withstand disasters, which many islands in the South Pacific are particularly vulnerable to.

After tropical storm Pam swept across the South Pacific in March 2015, Tearfund launched an appeal to address the impact of the storm and help communities plan for future disasters. The Ola Fou programme is part of that response.

Agent for change

Osimo returned to his community determined to use his training to help other boys and young men turn their lives around. He gathered a group of them together to start a coffee shop. They took turns to run it, making and selling donuts as well as coffee.

‘Some of the boys have now gone to school with the money they made,’ says Osimo. ‘The boys are proud of what they have been able to achieve and are proud because they have a bank account.’

The group have also painted the local school and have started helping widows in the community. People can see how these boys, who used to be involved in crime or stayed idle at home, have changed and are now working to improve their community.

‘I have never done anything like this before,’ says Osimo with a broad smile. ‘Ola Fou helped me to change my attitude. Before, I just caused problems – day and night my life was all about stealing. I left my parents’ home because they did not like what I was doing.’

‘Ola Fou taught me about the circle of courage – a model of positive youth development. They even encouraged me to lead devotions, which I’d never done before, and I began to understand the Bible more.’

God’s good plan

Osimo is not stopping there – he has recognised that he can really make a difference. Next year, he hopes to run for a council seat in his village, so that he can use the skills he has learned to lead his community.

‘I want to get a new road to our village and a clean water supply,’ he says. ‘God has made an impact in my life. I realised that God has a good plan for me, he did not plan for me to be a criminal. People know I did bad things before I joined the Ola Fou programme, but now people can see the change Ola Fou has made in me.’

This is a young man whose life has been transformed, who is making a profound difference in his community and who is showing others the way forward.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Praise God for his intervention in Osimo’s life and for the leadership programme that has equipped him to make a difference in his community.
- Pray for Osimo, that he will be able to use his skills in leading his community and that the village will get the new road and clean water supply he dreams of.
- Pray also for the young boys that Osimo is working with, that they will continue to work for the good of the community and that many more can find a future without crime.

WHERE COULD THE NEED BE GREATEST IN 2018?

This year we have seen continuing crises in places such as Yemen, Central African Republic, South Asia and across East Africa. But what is the outlook for 2018? Where in the world could the need be greatest?

We asked our international teams to outline what they believe will be the main areas needing prayer in 2018. Here's what they say:

EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

Contributed by Donald Mavunduse, head of region

- 50 per cent of the population in South Sudan need food aid
- Two million refugees created by conflict in South Sudan
- 80-90 per cent of livelihoods in Somaliland lost due to drought

Three years of drought have devastated **Somaliland**. As livestock farming is the predominant livelihood here, this is a game-changer. With no sign of the drought lifting yet, some innovative thinking about alternative livelihood options will be needed.

In **South Sudan** the conflict rages on and there is little international pressure for it to end. The trend of escalating displacement and disrupted livelihoods is expected to continue. There are warnings that famine could be declared in some areas early in 2018. South Sudan remains the most dangerous place for aid workers, with six killed in one recent incident.

The **Burundi crisis** has not received enough international attention. Hundreds of thousands of Burundians continue to struggle to access basics such as food, and many are still displaced from their homes and living as refugees in countries such as Tanzania.

WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Contributed by Martin Jennings, head of region

- 889,000 people face food insecurity in Chad and Mali
- 2.5 million people in the Central African Republic predicted to need humanitarian assistance in 2018
- £1.26 billion required to help 13 million people in the Democratic Republic of Congo
- 1.7 million people forced from their homes in Nigeria

The number of people in **Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger**, known as the Sahel belt, who will require humanitarian assistance is set to increase, according to recent assessments. Poor rainfall has caused a major shortfall in cereal and pasture production, with many not having enough food in the lean season (July – August). Committed prayer is required for our work in these countries, and, more importantly, for the people affected.

The **Central African Republic (CAR)** and **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** remain incredibly vulnerable due to political unrest and increasing violence. Conflict has displaced millions of people, forcing many into neighbouring countries. Humanitarian needs such as food, water and sanitation are not being fully met, with the violence making aid and relief work incredibly difficult.

Many women in DRC have encountered or are at risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and protection is required. Please pray that those in need can be reached and supported.

In **Liberia, Sierra Leone** and **Ivory Coast**, there has been a significant increase in the cost of living, resulting in economic pressure and people not being able to meet their basic needs. The mudslides in Sierra Leone in August 2017 killed over 1,000 people and left many more lacking access to basic services and shelter. Tearfund has been responding by providing food, clean water, mattresses, blankets, clothing and medication.

Meanwhile, **Nigeria's** Boko Haram crisis persists, with millions still in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The north-east of the country in particular faces ever-increasing levels of food insecurity. Key infrastructure and shelter has been destroyed during the insurgency, leaving millions of people unable to rebuild their livelihoods or access health services. Lift up those in need that cannot be reached, and those who are trying to go back home and restart their lives and pray for their protection.

EURASIA, LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN

Contributed by Sarah Newnham, head of region

- 22.2 million people in need of humanitarian aid in Yemen
- Three million people displaced across Iraq
- Armed groups likely to take advantage of power vacuums across the Middle East

In **Yemen**, food, health, water and sanitation needs are set to increase throughout 2018. The risk of falling into famine remains a threat if commercial imports deteriorate any further, and if active conflict cuts people off from trade and humanitarian aid. Also, the cholera outbreak may continue due to the lack of clean water, sanitation, hygiene and healthcare.

In **Iraq**, Kurdish and Iraqi forces regained substantial territory from ISIS in 2017, while one million people were displaced. With the loss of its last stronghold in Iraq, ISIS will most likely shift towards more non-traditional conflict strategies and improvised attacks.

The rate of people returning to their homes in Iraq has increased throughout 2017. This trend is likely to continue into 2018, despite concerns over personal protection, the availability of shelter, and the opportunities to rebuild livelihoods.

When they return to their communities, many Iraqis will face unresolved conflicts, contamination from explosives, and limited livelihood opportunities. Establishment of civil

governance structures and delivery of public services will be the primary challenge within Iraq. Various opposition armed groups are likely to take advantage of these new power vacuums to gain supporters, causing greater instability.

Across **Latin America**, complex challenges remain, including how to reduce poverty and inequality, and how to improve citizen security and resilience to disasters. Among the most vulnerable groups in Latin America are the indigenous groups, as they tend to have a lower level of education, unequal access to land and other productive assets, and fewer opportunities in general.

ASIA

Contributed by Steve Collins, head of region

- 30 million people affected by severe flooding in South Asia
- Over 1,200 people killed by the 2017 floods
- One million refugees from Myanmar currently housed in camps in Bangladesh

In August 2017, **Bangladesh, India and Nepal** were devastated by widespread flooding. Over 1,200 people were killed, yet the disaster had very little mainstream media coverage in the UK. People who were already vulnerable and living in poverty were the most affected and will continue to struggle to rebuild their lives.

It's likely that disasters of this nature will continue to strike across Asia in 2018, and, whilst we might not see any one event on a similar scale to the floods, the numbers of people affected by multiple small and medium scale disasters will be significant.

Whilst most countries in Asia continue to experience overall economic growth, the favourable headlines hide the continued plight of many groups who continue to be marginalised and are treated unjustly. The most obvious example we have seen in 2017 is Muslims who have been forced to flee into **Bangladesh** from **Myanmar's** Rakhine State.

Around 1 million refugees are currently housed in camps in Bangladesh, totally dependent on aid. Many of them are struggling to cope with traumatic experiences as they fled their homes in Myanmar. Whilst the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh have signed an understanding to repatriate the refugees, how, and even if this will be possible in practice remains to be seen.

With elections planned across many Asian countries in 2018, there is a huge risk of government policies being politicised in a way that favours those already in a position of power and privilege, to the detriment of minorities. When political power is not used impartially and policies are not implemented fairly, the most vulnerable people are marginalised. We need to ask God to raise up servant-hearted leaders who represent all those in their constituencies impartially.

A NOTE FROM OUR CEO...

Having just returned from a visit to South Sudan, I was able to witness how desperate the situation is in that troubled country. And, sadly, this is not a unique situation, as conflict and climate change continue to cause great need in protracted crises all over our world. Yet we know Jesus goes before us. In 2018 – our 50th year – we at Tearfund again commit to following him where the need truly is greatest, responding to needs on the ground and advocating for justice. We are hugely grateful for your prayers and for all your faithfulness in supporting our work, and we know that our God is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine.

Nigel Harris, Tearfund CEO

FIFTY YEARS, FIFTY COUNTRIES: AFGHANISTAN

Tearfund has been working in Afghanistan since 1971. This is a country of majestic mountain ranges and magnificent lakes, but its beauty has been marred by decades of strife. Images of pain, poverty and a seemingly hopeless cycle of conflict are more often associated with this country.

A protracted conflict of nearly 40 years has been fuelled by multiple armed opposition groups and regional instability. Last year, the number of civilian casualties soared, and in the last two years alone more than 1 million Afghans have been displaced.

Around three-quarters of the population is rural, many living in remote regions lacking any formal infrastructure. Access is limited by conflict as well as a harsh landscape.

Wells of hope

As he stands in front of the newly finished well, Mohammed Daud* has a faraway look on his face. He dreams of what the well means for his community.

Mohammed is the head of a small village of 74 families in a poor and remote corner of north-east Afghanistan. He has lived in this village all his life, only once travelling to the provincial capital, Faisabad – an eight-day journey by donkey over the 10,000 foot Ghoroda Pass. Tearfund's partner has worked in this remote area for 15 years, and recently supported Mohammed's community to create its first ever safe water supply.

Villagers have also been equipped to build their own latrines, and enthusiastically received our partner's trainers, who delivered potentially life-saving health and hygiene classes. Insert quote: 'I'm very thankful you came to us – I hope that life will be much better for us.' Mohammed

This is an area that few organisations have even heard of, let alone ventured into. The difficult terrain and heavy snows mean that our partner can only reach these areas for six months of every year. But for Mohammed and his community, things will never be the same. 'I'm very thankful you came to us – I hope that life will be much better for us,' he says.

The broader picture

'Conflict has been a key factor that has kept Afghanistan as one of the most fragile countries in the world,' explains Bruce Clark, Tearfund's Country Representative for Afghanistan. And that fragility and need is exactly why Tearfund is there.

'We began our first partnership in Afghanistan in 1971, and we've supported work there ever since. Our work has focused on a range of areas, including women's self-help groups, community development, disability, physical and mental health, water and sanitation, livelihoods and literacy.'

The country is also vulnerable to natural disasters. In 2001, Tearfund launched an emergency appeal when a severe drought threatened millions of Afghans with food and water shortages.

So many lives have been transformed over the years, as communities have accessed safe water and electricity; as deaf and blind children have been able to go to school; and as women have been empowered to provide for their families through savings groups. We praise God for this. But there's more to be done.

Please pray with us for Afghanistan.

- After almost four decades of conflict there seems no end in sight – in fact there has recently been an escalation in violence. Please pray for peace, and for Afghans to be able to thrive in their stunningly beautiful country, which has so much potential.
- Pray for those who have been displaced in Afghanistan and for the large numbers of refugees returning from Pakistan and Iran. Pray for the government as it struggles to deal with the crisis and maintain influence in many regions of the country.
- More than 18 million people need safe sanitation, including access to clean water. Praise God for the work of our partner and the difference made to communities. Please pray for the funding and personnel needed to ensure that more communities can benefit.

**Name changed to protect identity*

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



A cholera outbreak in Zambia has claimed over 50 lives. Schools have delayed re-opening, street food stalls – a key source of contamination – have been demolished and gatherings of more than five people have been restricted. Please pray that the outbreak can be swiftly contained and livelihoods can be restored.



Tens of thousands of Rohingya children have lost or been separated from their parents in Myanmar and Bangladesh; please pray for God's protection over them. The refugee crisis there is still at critical levels; pray that solutions will be found and that aid agencies will have the support and resources they need to help the vulnerable.



Please continue to pray for Zimbabwe. Pray for wisdom for newly elected President, Emmerson Mnangagwa, and for God's peace, hope and transformation across the nation.