

# ONE VOICE

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

## **WE WON'T STOP UNTIL POVERTY STOPS**

### ***An introduction to Tearfund's 50th year by Nigel Harris, Tearfund Chief Executive***

Persistence is in Tearfund's DNA, because our father God is relentlessly loving, and he is at the very heart of who we are. As we enter our 50th year, we are more determined than ever to beat poverty! There will be no holding back, and it's this conviction that's behind our new campaign: We won't stop until poverty stops.

This is Tearfund's 50th year. And with a little age comes much experience. We've learnt to take our lead from Christ, quite literally: following Jesus where the need is greatest. We're called to do as he did here on earth, restoring relationships – between people and God, people and themselves, and people and the wider creation.

We've learnt that this restoration is the key to overcoming poverty. Biblically, the 50th year is a year of Jubilee and we want to offer that spirit of release and restoration to people living in poverty.

### **Restored and released**

Birungi, age 22, lives in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). As a child from a poor family – and a girl – Birungi wasn't allowed to go to school. In her own view and that of her community, she had nothing to offer, and no opportunities available to her. Birungi felt helpless, and feared for her future.

Through his local church, Birungi's uncle heard about a skills workshop run by Tearfund's local church partner, Action Entraide. He encouraged Birungi to learn new skills. She applied and was accepted and she learnt to sew. Birungi's faith and understanding of God grew as she spent time with the teachers. Her self-belief blossomed.

At the end of her training, our partner gave Birungi a sewing machine, which she used to start a tailoring business. She'd soon saved enough money to buy a piglet, which she raised and sold, using the profit to buy a calf. Birungi now plans to breed and sell cows – a good, stable livelihood in the DRC – as well as grow her business.

Birungi rejoices over her newfound stability and independence. But more important to her is restoration and freedom. She's found self-worth through her faith in Jesus, and is no longer brought down by the social brokenness that labels her 'just a woman'.

She is confident in her identity as a precious child of God, capable of great things, and she's a role model for those around her. She's been set free by choosing her own path, and has now overcome the limitations faced by many poor families in the DRC. 'I long to see other girls restored and set free,' says Birungi.

### **More to do**

Birungi is one of hundreds of thousands of people we've seen released from material and spiritual poverty over 50 years. Stories like hers fuel our belief that an end to extreme poverty is possible. But the need remains great. In the DRC alone, 87 per cent of people still live below the poverty line.

Powerful in-roads against poverty have been made. Countless individuals like Birungi and communities like hers have been or are being released from poverty. But there is more to do. We won't stop until poverty stops.

### **PRAY FOR THE WORK:**

- As part of our 50th year, we have ambitious goals to see one million prayers raised for an end to poverty, 50,000 actions taken to end global poverty, and five million people released from poverty. We can only do this with God. Please lift up the year ahead to him.
- Praise God for the way he has sustained and guided Tearfund since its birth in 1968, and for the way he has blessed us through our truly wonderful supporters.
- Pray for Birungi, and thank God for stories like hers. Pray for our staff and partners as they do all they can to see more lives restored.

### **A NOTE FROM...**

'I am so excited about what God is going to do in this, Tearfund's 50th year! As ever, prayer is crucial. And I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you personally for every prayer you've raised and will raise. You are making a huge difference, and you are very much appreciated.' **Nigel Harris, Tearfund Chief Executive**

You can find out more about our 2018 campaign and get involved at [www.tearfund.org/wewontstop](http://www.tearfund.org/wewontstop)

(Based on an article first published in *Tear Times*)

## **FIFTY YEARS, FIFTY COUNTRIES: ANGOLA**

**When independence came to Angola in 1975, it was not the longed-for dawning of a new era. Instead, it was a desperate plunge into a civil war that would characterise the life of the nation for decades.**

Peace did finally come to the nation almost 16 years ago, but the dark legacy of conflict remains. Many had only known war – families displaced and torn apart, death, destruction and a lack of hope. Tearfund provided much-needed humanitarian assistance during the war, and has continued to do so. There has also been a strong emphasis on addressing the issue of HIV and AIDS.

More recently, the primary aim of our work in Angola has been to equip churches to become radical agents of change and empower their local communities to escape poverty.

### **Power of the word**

‘I was a lady who sold alcoholic drinks and also drank a lot myself,’ says Maria from Huambo Province. ‘My companion left because I could not prepare meals, his clothes, nor did I care well for our children. One day I was invited to participate in a Bible study.’

At this meeting, Maria heard that God could transform her life. She thought about her life – she was selling her belongings in order to drink, she had lost her husband, things were not going well.

‘With further Bible studies I [continued] thinking and reflecting, and that’s where I made the decision not to drink and sell alcohol anymore,’ she says. ‘Now, I am happy. Many do not believe in my change – the neighbours, the friends, also my companion and brothers-in-law. Thanks to God, today I am well.’

Through a range of Bible studies, church congregations are able to explore many areas of life, encouraging changes in mindsets and deepening understanding of how individuals and communities can be transformed.

‘Today I notice a lot of change through the Bible studies,’ says Carlos, a church member from Cuito. ‘Now I understand the value of tithing. I give my contributions regularly,

which I didn't do before. I like to read the Bible in my house, I do not like to miss the Sunday Bible classes. I also learned to work with others because it makes the job easy and quick.'

### **A new dawn for Angola?**

When the war ended in 2002, some improvement was seen, as infrastructure was developed, families were reunited and the provision of healthcare and education improved. But progress was dogged by systemic corruption, and those living in poverty saw little change to their circumstances. However, there is now tentative optimism about the future.

'A new president was elected last year and there is a real hope that this might be the start of something better,' says Dickon Crawford, Head of Tearfund's work in Angola. A fight against corruption is underway, public media has opened up, and the country's economy appears to be improving.

While these are all promising signs, it is the growing vision within the church to transform its communities that is bringing lasting change to the lives of those like Maria and Castro. Let's pray for Angola:

- Pray for President João Lourenço, that he will rule with fairness and integrity, promoting justice for all Angolans. Pray that the actions being taken to overcome corruption and improve basic services are effective and benefit ordinary Angolans.
- Pray for the church in Angola, that it would be inspired to serve the poor and most vulnerable. Pray for courage for church leaders to speak out for truth and justice.
- Pray for our partners as they help to equip churches, supporting the development of livelihood opportunities for their people. Pray for the individuals being impacted by God's word, that they would continue to grow and see their lives changed.

### **A SKETCH IN TIME**

**How a Tearfund partner organisation in Myanmar got their nation talking about the future, with simple pen and ink drawings.**

The tax collector leans out of his booth and calls out to the nearby citizens: 'You need to pay tax to make everything work!'

This is political cartooning Myanmar-style and it doesn't pull its punches. It isn't what you'd expect from a nation long closed-off from the outside world, under military rule. 'Some in government won't like this one, but it will start a lot of conversations,' admits David Allan, the founder of Tearfund partner, Spectrum. Spectrum has been running for

over a decade now, speaking up on issues of environmental protection, human rights and economic justice in Myanmar.

The last of these – economic justice – is a big issue in the country. Myanmar has one of the lowest ‘transparency’ ratings of any nation in Asia. People are being very actively encouraged to pay their taxes, but most as yet, according to David, have little idea of where their money ends up.

### **More than words**

Spectrum first used cartoons to communicate with children about environmental issues. However, they soon realised that a cartoon could reach a variety of people in a way that words, statistics and graphs couldn’t.

Cartoons are what David calls a ‘safe voice,’ an indirect way to present difficult messages.

‘At times, cartoons shown can be surprisingly critical. I take advice from staff on what we can and can’t run. Military topics are particularly sensitive. However, if we can turn things around and use them constructively to discuss the concerns or possible fears of the people, it reduces the potential for a backlash later.’

I wonder how the more controversial images go down with the nation’s leaders and officials. Spectrum will often put their work on display outside official conferences, and recently ran their own exhibition, Budget Transparency for Improving People’s Lives.

‘Many times I’ve seen ministers obviously enjoying the cartoons and looking very thoughtful. Sometimes they just laugh. On another occasion, I recall one saying, “No, no; you can’t represent this in this way...” But then he went on, “give me 1,000 copies for distribution to senior government officials in all the states and regions.”’ David dutifully provided the material. The very senior official was as good as his word, and distributed the cartoon book across the country.

### **My nation, my rights**

The cartoons are far more than a medium for satire. Spectrum produces a range of educational material.

‘We want children to realise that they’ve got rights,’ says David. ‘Rights to healthcare, rights to education and a right to be safe and protected. But these books are also for the politicians; they need to be reminded that they have commitments too, to both children and adults.’

'Myanmar is a very artistic society; people have lived with a lot of hardship and difficulty. It means that they look for irony and humour to provide them with a voice – cartoons can do all these things.'

### **PLEASE PRAY:**

- Pray that through this work, Spectrum can continue to be listened to by Myanmar's government.
- Ask God that Spectrum's campaigning work will influence generations, to become more aware of their rights and engaged in the running of their country.
- Pray for other Tearfund partners around the world as they seek creative ways to share important messages like this.

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

✓ Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh are experiencing an outbreak of diphtheria. An immunisation programme has been started; please pray that it will be effective. Also, pray for God's protection over the health of refugees.

✓ A recent ceasefire between South Sudan's warring parties began on the 24 December, but both sides have been accused of continued violations. The next stage of the peace initiative will take place in February, so please pray for all those involved with this process, and that long-term peace will be achieved.

✓ Please pray for the UK volunteers who have just landed overseas, ready to engage with the work and vision of Tearfund partners, and for others preparing to leave. Pray that God will guide their steps as they live and work side by side with communities affected by injustice.