

ONE VOICE

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

SYRIA: HOME IS WHERE THE WAR IS

As winter sets in, concern grows for the people of Syria and those who've fled to neighbouring countries. Tearfund is working with these refugees and we plan to continue and expand our work.

Our News Editor, Andrew Horton, spoke to Kieren Barnes, Middle East Response Director, to find out more:

How has Tearfund been responding to the crisis?

Our main focus has been on the large number of refugees who've fled the conflict. For five years now we've been providing food and basic needs to desperate people who have left almost everything behind.

In the cold winter months we have provided blankets and kits to help the families cope with the cold, as they live in tarpaulin shelters. Our partners have also helped provide trauma care.

Where have the Syrian people fled to, and how have those countries coped?

Lebanon and Jordan have both taken in huge numbers of refugees from Syria. Tearfund has been standing with them to help them cope with the influx over the last few years.

Some of the bigger challenges have been centred around education. In Lebanon there are over half a million refugee children. The pressures on the school system are immense and unfortunately many children will go without formal education for a number of years. In recent years Tearfund has been working on some protection projects in the schools to support children who have experienced trauma or who might still be at risk in vulnerable homes.

We are also working with a peacebuilding partner that focuses on school children, particularly teenagers. When you have a large number of refugees and limited resources tensions can rise. We are working with teenagers to build peace for the next generation, helping them cope with frustrations, hatred and anger; helping them to appreciate their differences and appreciate one another.

How important is it to keep this public attention on Syria and its people?

Having the public aware of what's happening in Syria and the other crises in the Middle East is vital. The more we share and the more we understand the better we can speak out to those in power who can have a positive impact on the ground.

I would encourage Tearfund supporters to spend more time learning and understanding what is happening across the Middle East, so they can direct their support in the most effective way.

Does Tearfund have plans to expand its work with Syrian refugees?

Our team in the Middle East is transitioning in the year ahead, looking to expand our work in protection needs and particularly to focus on trauma care and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.

We will continue to provide for emergency basic needs but we now also want to look more deeply into some of the long-term solutions and prevention of future problems.

What's your key message to Tearfund supporters today?

I think the key message is don't give up on Syria and the Middle East.

It is when a crisis drags on that we need to be the most steely and determined to bring hope to the hopeless, to bring life and healing to those who are still so desperate.

The stories will keep coming from this region, stories of struggles and challenges, stories that will break your heart, but we cannot give up, we must be determined to keep going and walking with these men, women and children who are in such need. This is the time when it counts more than ever.

Please keep Syria and the Middle East in your thoughts, please keep reading up and learning more about the context and do find ways to speak up on behalf of those whose voices are struggling to be heard.

(Note: This is part of a longer interview; for the full article visit www.tearfund.org/latest)

PRAY FOR OUR WORK:

(due to security concerns please do not share these prayer points online)

- Thank God for Tearfund's staff and partners who are committed and courageous in their efforts to help. Pray for peace in Syria and that its people would be able to return home.
- Particularly remember Syrian children who are struggling to get an education, on top of the traumatic experiences they may have witnessed, the cold weather and the risk of poor health.

- Please pray for the civilians and communities caught up in the recent escalation in violence in the city of Afrin, near the border of Turkey in northern Syria. The UN estimates that around 5,000 people have been displaced and many more are fleeing. Please pray for a quick and peaceful resolution and the safety of all in this area.

A NOTE FROM...

'It is so heart-breaking to hear stories of Syrians displaced by conflict. But the impact Tearfund's staff and partners are having is such an encouragement, and is made possible by your incredible support. Please continue to stand with us and pray for those in Syria and across the Middle East living in such desperate times.' **Lizzie Overton, Supporter Care Team**

FIFTY YEARS, FIFTY COUNTRIES: BANGLADESH

'Though the news of the Bangladesh flood disaster in September last year quickly faded from our TV screens, thousands of Bangladeshi people still face an uphill struggle to rebuild their shattered livelihoods.'

You might think this quote refers to the massive flooding in 2017, but it's actually from the spring edition of Tear Times in 1988.

And back in 1970, Tearfund's first response in what would become Bangladesh was rescue and rehabilitation work after a lethal tidal wave. Flooding again in 1974 compounded the desperate need of a young nation reeling from civil war, and Tearfund's partners have been working to release communities from poverty since the birth of the nation.

After the floods

Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated countries. Its people are crammed into a delta of rivers that empty out into the Bay of Bengal. Most of Bangladesh is low-lying and incredibly vulnerable to flooding.

As such, preparing communities to withstand, and recover from, disasters has been a critical aspect of Tearfund's work in this country for many years.

Like many in her village, Selma* and her husband were very poor with no fixed income. She worked at home, as her husband and father-in-law went to work in the fields. And when regular monsoon flooding came even the little they had was often wiped away.

But when Tearfund partner LAMB started working in Selma's community, things changed.

Helping themselves

Following training given by LAMB, Selma joined 20 other women to form a savings group. In time, this allowed her to take a loan to buy piglets and chicks, which she reared. She sold the piglets

six months later for a profit and is now selling eggs in the market. Selma has helped to secure her family's future.

Prabin* is an active church leader in a similar community. He has regularly attended training and seminars organised by LAMB.

'There have been meaningful changes in the community over the last two years,' he says. 'Eighteen families have improved their financial status through poultry rearing and 43 families are using new knowledge to establish and maintain kitchen gardens. We have created a contingency plan and a community fund for use during emergencies. We are all praising God for these blessings.'

A changing climate

With 80 per cent of its land area prone to flooding, Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the impacts of global climate change.

The Government of Bangladesh is committed to increasing the country's resilience to climate change, as well as reducing the risks posed to national development. A National Climate Change Resilience Fund was established in 2010.

'Climate change worsens many of the current problems and natural hazards the county faces,' explains Jacob Sarker, Head of Tearfund's work in Bangladesh. 'The higher temperature and changing rainfall patterns, coupled with increased flooding and drought, are likely to reduce crop yields and crop production.'

All of these changes threaten the food security, livelihoods and health of those living in poverty and underline the importance of helping communities overcome these challenges.

Please pray with us for the continuing work in Bangladesh.

PRAY FOR OUR WORK:

- Praise God for the amazing response to the South Asia floods appeal last year, which enabled LAMB to immediately provide life-saving aid to over 10,000 people and set up 14 medical camps, among other interventions.
- Pray for communities all over Bangladesh who are still rebuilding after the floods. Pray that they would be encouraged and that they would receive the help and training they need to be better prepared for future disasters.
- Pray for the government of Bangladesh and for our partners working hard to overcome the challenges of the changing climate. Pray for wisdom and for good working relationships that will benefit those being affected by climate change.

* names changed to protect identity

GATHERING THE RAIN IN YEMEN

The crisis in Yemen continues. Three quarters of the population are in need of humanitarian assistance, including many children.

Tearfund's partners are there, working with courage and determination to bring immediate relief and longer term support to those in most need.

Labelled the world's worst humanitarian crisis, eight million people are facing starvation, while the largest cholera outbreak on record swept the country last year. According to UN data, nearly two million children are out of school, and 1.8 million children under the age of five are acutely malnourished.

KEY FACTS:

- Before the war, Yemen was the poorest country in the Middle East. It has a population of 28 million.
- Yemen is the world's worst humanitarian crisis in terms of numbers – 22.3 million people need humanitarian assistance.
- The country imports approximately 90 per cent of its food. Due to import blockades, eight million people are facing starvation.
- In 2017, Yemen saw the biggest cholera outbreak on record – over one million cases were reported.

On Sunday 21 January, the UN launched a 2018 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan.

'Humanitarian assistance is not the solution to the plight of the people of Yemen, but it is the only lifeline for millions of them,' says Jamie McGoldrick, UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen. The 2018 response plan is tailored not only to address the needs of the most vulnerable, but respond to them in a more sustainable and coordinated manner.

Long-term solutions

Because of this, many humanitarian organisations are working on projects that will provide solutions for Yemen in the long-term, in addition to providing shorter-term humanitarian aid.

One way Tearfund is helping is by supporting the construction of rainwater cisterns in Yemen, which last for up to 10 years. Cisterns are holes dug in the ground and then lined with bricks and cement. They can store rainwater water for communities for months.

Because Yemen is one of the world's most water-poor countries, communities often are forced to truck water into villages – an expensive and labour-intensive option. Drilling wells is also expensive and depletes underground sources of water, which are already extremely low.

However, collecting and storing rainwater is a local, sustainable method of sourcing water for the community for up to three months – the duration of the dry season.

Life-sustaining water

In Hajjah, Tearfund is funding a project to construct eight cisterns in eight villages, helping provide water for 303 families.

The construction process begins by scoping the land to find suitable sites, excavating, making bricks and finally lining the hole in the ground with bricks and cement.

'Clean water is an essential component for the health and wellbeing of all families in Yemen,' says Megan Howe, Tearfund's Programme Officer for Yemen. 'But with the recent rise in prices of food, fuel and trucked water, families are forced to drink dirty water or travel extreme distances to fetch water for their families. These cisterns, along with hygiene education and the construction of household toilets, prevent life-threatening diseases and will help these communities for years to come.'

PRAY FOR THE WORK:

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- Thank God for the progress being made by our partners in building cisterns for gathering much-needed rainwater.
- Continue to pray for our partners who work in a very challenging context.
- Ask God for peace and restoration to be seen in Yemen.

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



Please pray for Afghanistan in the wake of the recent attacks on the Intercontinental Hotel and Save the Children offices. Pray for those who lost loved ones and for those overcoming the trauma of the attacks.



The Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of Congo has experienced renewed conflict since 2016 and over 3 million people now face hunger. Please pray for the resources for agencies to meet this great need and for peace across the region.



Praise God for the incredible response to our Aid Match Appeal. The funds raised, together with the UK Aid, will change the lives of people in the Central African Republic and around the world who have suffered so much due to conflict and poverty.