

ONE VOICE

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

SING A NEW SONG

‘There are many cases of sexual violence here,’ says Amani. ‘Men force women to have sex without consent. So we sing songs about that.’

Amani lives in the Ituri province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Violence against women doesn’t just happen behind closed doors here, it’s rife in conflict too, with sexual violence used as a weapon of war.

Yet, in the midst of a seemingly hopeless situation, there is a beacon of light.

Powered by the support of people like you, Tearfund’s partner Action Entraide has set up a number of initiatives to promote peace and reconciliation in the DRC, as well as challenge harmful behaviours.

One of these is a choir for young people, led by Amani. It’s a mixed group of eight singers aged in their late teens to early 30s.

Sing and you’re winning

‘We decided to write songs to mobilise people against sexual violence,’ says Amani. ‘To help people deal with the trauma, and to teach those involved in violence another way.’

Eighteen-year-old Victoria is another member of the choir. ‘The women say we help them because we bring change,’ says Victoria. ‘Cases of rape have reduced and we give them advice on how to protect themselves.’

Sadly, the violence is often perpetrated by young men. ‘Our message in the songs is to discourage young people from being involved in violence,’ says Amani. The choir visits places where young people gather, singing and performing dramas to challenge behaviour and promote gender equality.

The need is still great, but the choir is having an impact

‘The songs have brought about change,’ says Amani. ‘Young men have been inspired to go to Bogoro [Action Entraide’s training centre] to get skills in carpentry and tailoring. Many girls too. We have seen changes in men’s behavior.’

And it's not just the men who are changing. 'Through our songs, we teach women to see that they can do more things,' says Victoria.

Inspiring and amazing as this is, the levels of violence remain too high in the DRC. Although the conflict has eased in many parts of the country, USAID reports that gender-based violence still affects nearly 60 per cent of women here.

Please join us in praying for the DRC.

Lord Jesus,

You know what it is to suffer, to feel the pain of rejection and abuse.

Thank you that you took the weight of humanity's pain upon yourself.

We lift up those in the DRC who have experienced sexual violence;

We pray for powerful healing, comfort and restoration.

We pray for a shift in hearts and minds, that harmful behaviours will change.

And we pray for your kingdom to come, and for your will to be done in the DRC.

In your holy name, amen.

A NOTE FROM...

'Stories like this give me hope. It's inspiring to see young people challenging their culture and speaking up for what is good. Thank you for your support, which makes initiatives like this possible.'

Alison Brooks, East and Central Africa Team

FIFTY YEARS, FIFTY COUNTRIES: MALAWI

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 Malawi.

Malawi is a small country with huge beauty and potential. Tucked between Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique, much of the country is dominated by Lake Malawi – home to more species of fish than any other lake in the world. Malawi's people are incredibly tenacious, friendly and full of life; however, they are also facing immense challenges.

Over the last few years, Malawi has faced severe economic difficulties due in part to the changing climate. This has affected the lives of the poorest most, with 2.8 million people lacking sufficient access to food. Nearly half of all children under the age of five have stunted growth due to malnutrition. Lack of access to safe water and the spread of HIV are also significant issues.

Tearfund has been operating in Malawi since the 1990s and works across the country through eight local partners. Together, we're promoting a way of tackling poverty known as church and community transformation: working with local churches to empower their community to lift themselves out of poverty.

The main areas of this work include building up communities' ability to cope with climate change, responding to emergencies such as droughts, and community savings (microfinance) groups.

Desperate for change

A key part of this is a scheme known as Foundations for Farming, which shows people how to maximise the growing potential of their land, and also protect the environment.

Two amazing women to have benefited from this are Polly and Sylvia. They live just 70km from each other, but their lives used to be very different.

Sylvia endured a daily battle to provide for her four children and elderly mother – her husband abandoned the family. 'All my life I have struggled to feed my children,' said Sylvia. 'I am desperate for change.'

In contrast, Polly – farming the same soil in the same weather conditions – was harvesting enough to feed her husband, three children and disabled grandmother, with two bags left over to sell. The difference was the Foundations for Farming training Polly had received.

Hunger-free

Last year, thanks to the support of people like you, our partner staff were able to train Sylvia's community as well. Despite drought conditions, Sylvia is expecting to harvest three times more than she did the previous year.

'I would like to thank [Tearfund's partner] for teaching me new farming skills,' says Sylvia. 'My life has changed so much. Thanks to using organic fertiliser, I have enough maize to feed my family. This year I plan to sell my harvest of groundnuts and build a better house.'

In 2018, Malawi is expected to have a reasonable harvest, but prolonged dry spells and pest infestations are still likely to have an impact. So, please keep this country and its people in your prayers.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Pray for the people of Malawi. Pray also for the government; that they will lead with love, integrity and transparency, and put the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable people first.
- Pray that the Foundations for Farming programme will continue to spread, so that more people are trained to grow food in a changing climate.
- Pray that God will continue to bless Polly and Sylvia, and that the chains of poverty and hunger will be permanently broken in their lives.

RAPID RESPONSE TO INDIA DROUGHT

Temperatures of 47°C have scorched parts of India this summer, with up to 90 per cent of all ponds and lakes drying up.

Tearfund's partner EFICOR launched a response to see what can be done to help the people of Madhya Pradesh, Bundelkhand in the north of the country.

This year the region faced its fourth successive drought, with villagers risking their lives to fetch water from remote locations.

It has led to a severe shortage of food and water for cattle – and many have died. It means that most of the families reliant on farming are struggling to support themselves.

Harsh times

According to Rajendra Singh, a leading conservationist, 'the drought [was] harsher this time, people are migrating but are not coming back to their villages, leaving behind the elderly along with farmland and cattle.'

Last month the Indian government officially declared drought in the area, but there has been a slow response in rural areas. It has carried out some water trucking, but there is no regular water supply to the villages. An estimated 65 per cent of farming families have since migrated to places like Delhi, Punjab, Haryana or Gujarat.

EFICOR is working among some of the communities worst affected, renovating ponds and drains to help collect rainwater more effectively. This is part of the organisation's ongoing development work in the area. Thankfully, rains have started to fall over the last couple of weeks, providing much needed respite.

Hotting up

Meanwhile, in neighbouring Pakistan, droughts have also hit hard. A UN report last month claimed the country could run out of water by 2025. There have been reports circulating that some people have been forced to drink water from the waste water drains.

Ben Niblett from Tearfund's Advocacy team says: 'Droughts like this remind us that climate change is urgent and hitting poor communities hard. It's not something that might happen in future, it's happening now.'




'Tearfund are calling on the World Bank to invest more in cheap, clean renewable energy instead of fossil fuels, so people in remote villages in India and around the world can have electricity for the first time.'

PRAYER FOCUS:

- Ask God to help those who aren't able to access water for themselves and their cattle. Pray this situation changes very soon and that the rains which have begun will continue.
- Thank God for our partner EFICOR, and the work it is planning to carry out in the most vulnerable communities.

- Please pray for the church to realise the threat of climate change to our brothers and sisters at risk of droughts, floods and rising seas around the world.

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

-  Pray for Ivory Coast, where flooding in the Abidjan area has killed more than 20 people and destroyed homes and livelihoods. Pray for the protection of families there throughout the rest of the rainy season, and that the government and the church will support survivors of the flood.
-  More than 100 volunteers are preparing for overseas placements with Tearfund this summer. They'll be spending up to four weeks living and learning alongside our partners around the world. Pray that they will have a positive impact upon the communities in which they're working, and that their hearts will be set alight for Jesus and for justice.
-  Violence has broken out in northern Mali, with several armed groups trying to disrupt the elections taking place later this month. Please pray for the church in Mali, which is doing its best to mediate between different groups to bring peace. Pray for an end to the violence, and for fair and peaceful elections.