

# ONE VOICE

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

## **GIVING WOMEN A CHANCE IN YEMEN**

**Married when she should have been going into secondary school, fleeing the abusive marriage, then finding herself threatened at gunpoint by her brothers concerned with protecting the family honour, Farah's experience reflects that of many women in Yemen.**

As this is the week of International Women's Day (8 March), we're celebrating Farah\* and others who have not allowed the cultural norms in their communities to shrink their horizons.

### **Standing firm**

Having found the courage to go back home, Farah also went back to school and took a job in a newly opened centre aimed at giving opportunities to rural women. Her father supported this, but she faced daily harassment from other members of her family – cultural norms in Yemen discourage girls from attaining more than a basic education and frown on women working outside the home.

Despite the threats, she kept working at the centre, teaching women to read and write. When the centre was forced to close in 2001 due to a lack of funding, Farah was determined to keep the valuable programmes going.

She doggedly pursued other avenues of funding and her persistence paid off. She learned about a new government programme allowing the formation of cooperative associations to provide people with vocational skills and education. These cooperatives could legally apply for and receive funding from donor agencies.

### **Watering the seeds of change**

Since the World Economic Forum (WEF) began publishing its Global Gender Gap Report in 2006, Yemen has always been ranked last among more than 140 nations in the report.

But Farah has challenged this inequality and the cooperative she founded has supported and trained thousands of women over the past 15 years, improving their skills in farming, first aid and literacy. The organisation has also implemented several projects to rehabilitate irrigation systems, schools, and community water and sanitation systems.

In partnership with Farah, we have helped many women and girls access reliable and safe water sources. Projects have included supplying water, improving infrastructure and distributing hygiene kits and sanitary supplies, together with training in good practices for health and disease prevention.

Better health and spending less time finding access to water puts girls in a better position to get an education. These projects also give women a fighting chance to succeed on their own and to have a positive impact on their families and communities.

### **Equality and opportunity**

Farah provides a great role model for them. 'I've had to have a good, strong will to get here,' she says. 'If I fail, people who look up to me will fail as well, so I need to keep going. When I see examples of other women who succeed it encourages me to continue.'

The WEF introduces its report with the statement that gender parity is fundamental to whether and how economies and societies thrive. However, the escalation of conflict in Yemen since March 2013 has exacerbated inequality and gender-based violence.

Farah remains determined to play her part in ensuring women in her society have every opportunity they can.

PLEASE PRAY:

*(Please do not share these online)*

- Pray for Farah and many women like her who courageously keep doing what they believe they need to do to challenge gender norms in their communities.
- Pray for women in Yemen and around the world who face discrimination and a severe lack of opportunities. Pray that damaging mindsets and customs would be changed.
- Pray for the people of Yemen facing incredible hardship with lack of healthcare, safe water, food and shelter. Pray for an end to the conflict.

*\* Name changed to protect identity*

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

'Yesterday was International Women's Day – a chance to celebrate the achievements of women the world over. Farah's story shows that, despite the overwhelming challenges women face in places like Yemen, inspiring female leaders are rising up. Please continue to pray for these amazing women.' **Megan Howe, Programme Officer, Yemen**

### **FIFTY YEARS, FIFTY COUNTRIES: CAR**

*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 CAR (Central African Republic).*

Since its independence in 1960, CAR has had a very tumultuous and violent history. When a coalition of armed groups seized power in 2012, it sparked a brutal conflict – the coalition sought to take control of towns and regions around the country resulting in retaliation attacks from a second armed group.

'Tearfund has been working in CAR since 2013, and we have seen both the incredible strength of its people, and the immense struggle they have had to bear,' says Nigel Harris, Tearfund Chief Executive.

The ongoing violence and subsequent displacement of people, along with the trauma caused by high levels of sexual violence, has left CAR in turmoil. And in April last year there was an increase in organised attacks with many humanitarian organisations evacuated from a number of cities.

### **The horror of war**

Before the conflict broke out, the lively market town of Kokoro was a bustling community. Manuella\*, like many others, had a small business here. Hers was selling cassava, which allowed her to provide for her family.

However this community, and Manuella's world, was torn apart. Going to fetch cassava one day, she realised armed groups had taken control of her crops. In a horrific assault Manuella was raped and all her money stolen.

'I did not know where to turn,' says Manuella. 'I lost not only my dignity, but everything I had. My husband abandoned me because of the rape, and I did not know how I would be able to provide for my six children.'

Tragically, a few months after the assault, Manuella's home was then burnt in a second brutal attack, resulting in her and her family being relocated to a camp for internally displaced people.

### **Restoring the broken**

Tearfund partner, Association Centrafricaine pour la Traduction de la Bible et l'Alphabétisation (ACATBA), was running a multi-purpose community centre near the camp. Here Manuella was able to find support and trauma-counselling, as well as love and friendship with other women.

'I feel relieved when I'm in the group of other women with whom we share our sorrows and worries,' explains Manuella. 'I think I am not alone in this situation, and that I can forgive those who hurt me.'

Thanks to the support she received, Manuella is now confident in sharing her story and is President of the Association of Women Survivors of Sexual Violence in her community. She also works with her church mobilising them to offer better support for women in CAR.

### **More to do**

Tearfund recently ran a pilot project offering a multi-pronged approach of tackling harmful gender norms and promoting gender equality through dialogue, as well as enabling women to become literate and financially self-sufficient by helping them build small businesses.

'With the help of the UK Government, who have recently aid-matched our work, we will be rolling out the programme on a much larger scale,' says Nigel Harris. 'Women are creating their own movement, building peace in their villages. To truly turn around the fortunes of this troubled nation we need to continue to advocate for peace and to unlock the true potential of CAR's resilient people.'

PLEASE PRAY:

- Pray for Manuella, her family and community, and many like them in CAR. Thank God for the work of ACATBA and the healing brought to Manuella and others. Pray that displaced families can soon return home and begin to rebuild their lives.
- Pray for the Tearfund UK Aid Match programme being rolled out in CAR this year. Pray for successful implementation and for many people to be reached and given hope through the programme.
- Pray for the safety of our teams and partners working in this challenging environment and pray for peace in CAR.

*\*Name changed to protect identity*

## **SHE'S THE BOSS**

**Alina's life changed twice thanks to Tearfund's partner and the local church, and today Alina is a successful businesswoman with a thriving shop. Not only has this helped them become more secure financially, it has also brought the whole family together. But it was not always like that...**

Alina used to be shunned and stigmatised by her community: they would spread rumours about what her husband Bikash was up to while away working overseas. Meanwhile she had to look after their three children – struggling to make ends meet waiting for her husband to return home.

### **Miraculous healing**

The family live in Sauraha, Chitwan district, central Nepal. They are the only Christians in the Hindu community. They came to faith when their eldest daughter fell sick and none of the treatments she was prescribed worked. They were desperate, so they visited the local church where they'd heard healings can happen. When they prayed, their daughter recovered. This miracle also brought them to faith.

But daily life was still a struggle. For six years, Bikash worked in a factory in Qatar without being able to come home. He worried about his family and, while he missed them, it was the only way to pay for their children's education.

'Being alone is very difficult,' says Alina. To help with the daily expenses Alina used to be a day labourer – it was tiring physical work, particularly with the responsibility of bringing up the children on her own. She felt hurt and angry with her neighbours who spoke behind her back.

### **Church rescue**

But, again, the church came to the rescue. Tearfund's partner Micah Nepal started up a self-help group in Alina's church to help struggling women like her establish businesses. This fired up Alina's imagination and she dreamed of starting a chatpate shop – a very popular Nepalese snack food.

With her new-found confidence and support from the group, Alina took out a loan of NPR 19,000 (£27). The shop has proved popular and she now sells drinks, chapati and pani puri – which she taught herself to cook. She's also developed business skills, pricing all of the goods to make sure the shop is profitable.

Now that Alina has her business, local people have started treating her differently. They see she is determined and able to look after her children, and all of the family are proud of her too.

### **Better together**

Bikash returned home, but will soon have to leave to seek work abroad again. 'Being together is very good,' says Alina.




She is thankful to Micah Nepal and her local church for all their support. Alina has big plans to expand her shop and develop her business skills. Now she has paid back the loan, the shop is all hers.

For Alina, training and encouragement from the church has brought out her God-given potential. It has restored family life – bringing them closer together. Alina now has confidence in her abilities. 'I'm the boss,' she says.

### **PLEASE PRAY:**

- Praise God for the story of Alina and her family. Thank God for initiatives such as these self help groups in Nepal, which are helping families to break free from poverty.
- Pray for families that have been split up by poverty, and pray that, like with Alina's family, relationships are able to be restored.
- Pray for God's blessing upon our staff and partners in Nepal – that God will guard, guide and strengthen them.

## PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

-  Please pray for increased security and God's protection over Tearfund staff and partners and the people of Burkina Faso, following targeted attacks on the French embassy and army headquarters in Ouagadougou last Friday. Pray for God's comfort for those who lost loved ones in the attack and the many who were wounded.
  
-  Please continue to pray for peace in Syria. Hostilities have escalated over the last fortnight, with the UN reporting that 400,000 people are trapped inside the eastern Ghouta region of Syria. Despite the call for a 30 day ceasefire, violence has continued, and humanitarian aid is struggling to get through. Pray for an end to the fighting and for urgent supplies to reach those in need. (Please do not share this prayer point online).
  
-  The impending cyclone and rainy season in South Asia (mid March through April) risks causing major damage to the Rohingya refugee camps, which have little or no protection against landslides and flooding. Emergency measures are being put in place, but urgent prayer is needed. Please pray that the rains will not be too severe, and pray for protection for these vulnerable people.