

ONE VOICE

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

EAST AFRICA CRISIS: ONE YEAR ON

Early last year a severe food crisis struck East Africa. A devastating drought compounded by conflicts in the region left 23 million people in need of food, water and medical treatment. The Disasters Emergency Committee launched an appeal on 15 March 2017.

The generous support received through this and Tearfund's own appeal has meant that we have been able to provide life-saving aid, including clean water, sanitation and hygiene promotion, food assistance, cash grants, and seeds and tools to thousands of extremely vulnerable people in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somaliland and South Sudan.

Four-by-four clinics

Esther* (29) emerges from her home into the midday heat at the sound of four-by-four vehicles arriving in the small village near to Kenya's border with Ethiopia. Her belly is heavy with her unborn child and she carries her young daughter on her hip.

A team from Tearfund's partner, Food for the Hungry (FH), are setting up registration books, scales, boxes of medicine and food as Esther and the rest of the village mothers gather around.

The nurses in the mobile clinic check all the mothers and young children, looking for serious cases of malnutrition and women at risk of complications with their pregnancies. After her assessment, Esther bundles up a supply of nutritional foods.

'We have been given some food for the youngest children, and also for the family,' she says, allowing herself a smile. 'It will help because there is not much food here in the community.' The clinic will return in a fortnight.

Herds are dying

Esther and her family are pastoral herders, moving with their livestock from season to season with the pasture, relying on the sale of their goats for all their needs. But the drought gripping East Africa, has meant many of their livestock have died. The remaining animals have become so thin, they have little value at market.

'The number of deaths of livestock really affected us,' says Esther. 'We had about 500 goats, but now I have 60. If you walk around you'll see so many carcasses of dead goats.' Without the usual income from their goats, they're unable to afford school fees, medical costs, and the money to buy water for her children.

A lifeline

In partnership with the Kenyan Ministry of Health, FH have been providing clinics to many remote villages in Northern Kenya.

'We get out there to the very hard to reach places,' says FH staff member, Diid Karaya. 'We've been able to support people who are really malnourished, like Esther who is pregnant and underweight. Because of the support, she's now receiving a food supplement so she can regain her weight and deliver a healthy baby.'

'In the past we've only been able to go out to each location once a month for outreach services. But with the support of Tearfund, we've been able to double that now. We're reaching more people and more children and saving more lives.'

Still more to do

Since the East Africa Appeal was launched last year, Tearfund has provided food assistance for 114,000 people; water for 65,000 people; hygiene and sanitation for 30,000 people; and malnutrition treatment for 14,000 people, across four countries.

However, despite the extensive humanitarian support from many agencies, the situation remains desperate in 2018. The region faces its fifth consecutive year of below average rainfall and the scale of the need is alarming.

'This drought is changing everything and requires long-term support,' says Andy Morgan, Deputy Head of Tearfund's East and Southern Africa Team. 'It will take years for communities to recover. Some pastoral communities may need to explore alternative livelihoods, as the changing climate makes traditional practices unsustainable.'

Thank you for your support for the people in East Africa. Let's continue to pray.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Pray for the rain to come and for the drought to be broken. The changing climate is fuelling the crisis – please pray that world leaders will commit to ways of reducing the impact on those living in poverty.
- Pray for the resources needed to meet the immediate needs of millions of people in Kenya, Ethiopia, Somaliland and South Sudan. Lift up each person and family suffering in these countries, and pray that they will receive the help they desperately need.
- Lay before God Tearfund's long-term programmes to promote peace and reconciliation, reduce communities' risk to disasters and prepare them to cope better in the future. Pray for these programmes to be effective and to be multiplied across many communities.

** Name changed to protect identity*

A NOTE FROM...

'A year on from the launch of the East Africa Appeal, we want to say a massive thank you for all your support and prayers. In the last year, we have reached over 154,000 people with emergency assistance. Together, we are making a difference! Thank you.'

Beth Mather, East and Southern Africa Team

FIFTY YEARS, FIFTY COUNTRIES: CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

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 the Central Asian States (CAS).

At a glance:

- 70 per cent of the population in certain states live in extreme poverty
- Half the economically active population are forced to find work abroad
- 46,374 people have benefitted from Tearfund-sponsored programmes to reduce sexual and gender-based violence in the last five years.
- 55 community leaders recently participated in peacebuilding training run by a Tearfund partner

The Central Asian States are a group of countries stretching from the Caspian Sea in the west to the border of western China in the east. Tearfund began working in the area in the 1990s as a response to the challenges presented by the dissolution of the Soviet Union – the effects of which are still being felt today.

The 1990s saw a total economic restructuring in Central Asia, resulting in widespread unemployment, family breakdown and institutional collapse. Independent states lacking in natural resources have struggled to recover and build a viable economic model.

There is a sense of hopelessness amongst many as they have seen a decline in incomes, education levels and opportunities for work in other regions of the post-Soviet Union.

Coupled with the new pressures of drug and alcohol addictions, an under-resourced state and mass migration, Central Asia has been facing challenging times.

Promoting hope

Today, Tearfund is working through local partners to support both urban and rural communities in combating poverty and the most prominent social issues.

These issues include the rise of alcohol and drug abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, violence, crime, family breakdown, homelessness and the spread of HIV.

Our partners are working to address these needs, through championing families, providing vocational training, offering rehabilitation services and promoting peacebuilding projects. One person whose life was completely turned around by this is 18-year-old Alana*.

Free to dream

'I do not have a father, and my mother is an alcoholic,' Alana tells us. 'Until I was 15 years old, I lived in an orphanage.' Girls like her in the Central Asian States are often cast off by society, but Alana never gave up hope. 'I always believed that I would achieve something,' she says. When she met staff from a local Tearfund partner, her hope paid off.

'Thanks to the [Tearfund partner] staff, I had a chance to continue my education and graduate from. Now I live in a social house run by them.'

With the support she received, Alana was able to attend a journalism course. 'My dream is to become a professional journalist who will cover the problems of other orphans,' she says. 'Now I am preparing to study journalism at university.'

Moving mountains

Alana now volunteers for Tearfund's partner, and also has a part-time job as a waitress in a cafe. 'Now I'm the one in charge in our social house, she says. 'I'm responsible for the newly arrived girls – I help them to get settled.

'Thanks to the opportunity given to me, I achieved a lot. I became more confident. After all, when people believe in you, you can move mountains!'

'I want to say "Thank you! You give HOPE!" After all, we deserve at least hope! I am very grateful to all who've given so much to help me to improve my life! Thank you so much.'

PLEASE PRAY:

- Give thanks for our dedicated staff and partners in Central Asia, who work tirelessly in challenging conditions.
- Pray that broken families and relationships would be restored across Central Asia.
- Pray that, through our livelihoods work, many people would be equipped with skills to pull themselves out of poverty and become better able to provide for their families.
- Lift up those caught in the cycle of alcohol and drug abuse; pray that these addictions would be broken, and that emotional wounds would be healed in Jesus' name.

**Name changed to protect identity*

HOPE IN THE ASHES: SEVEN YEARS OF WAR IN SYRIA

'The scale, severity, and complexity of needs across Syria remain overwhelming,' says the UN, as the country enters its eighth year of conflict. It has been a devastating time for the people of Syria, who've seen little sign of peace. But there is hope in the ashes.

The need is great

Nearly half of the world's 22.5 million refugees come from just four countries. Syria tops the list, with 5.6 million refugees. That's nearly a quarter of the world's refugees, and many of them are children.

'There are children being born in refugee camps and informal settlements who have not known anything else but being displaced from their home country, which they have never seen,' says Kieren Barnes, Tearfund's Middle East Response Director.

The statistics make for shocking reading:

- 13.1 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance
- 5.6 million people have fled Syria
- 6.1 million people have been displaced within the country itself

The fighting has escalated in recent weeks. UN reports are that 400,000 people are trapped inside the eastern region of Ghouta. They have little food or medical supplies, as aid convoys struggle to reach them.

Life, healing and hope

Against the backdrop of a complex crisis brought about by ongoing conflict, our staff and partners are working relentlessly to reach those in most need, including refugees in neighbouring Lebanon and Jordan.

We are bringing life through the provision of essential food and hygiene parcels for refugee families, but also through mental health programmes to help people learn to live beyond the shadow of terrible experiences.

We are bringing emotional healing through trauma counselling and other interventions. Among those benefiting are survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, an injustice that so often goes hand in hand with war.

We are also bringing hope through crucial peacebuilding initiatives. One of our partners in Lebanon is uniting young people from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, to journey together in exploring the power of forgiveness. The young people are learning how to respond to conflict and violence in ways that are peaceful.

The strength to smile

Diana* is one of many Syrian refugees in Jordan to benefit from the work of our partners.

'When I entered the programme, I was surprised by the wonderful way I was treated,' says Diana. 'I witnessed an unprecedented respect for our humanity, loss, challenges, grief and for the difficulty that we have experienced. We learned that we still have value despite the circumstances, and we did not lose our values and respect because of the war.'

Tragically, Diana did lose her parents, husband, two brothers and one of her sons when a bomb exploded close to where they were taking shelter. Her surviving son lost a leg, and Diana was struggling to find the strength to deal with her own pain in order to support her son. This changed through the work of our partner.

'I realised that I was able to overcome my difficult circumstances, and that I should be strong for my children,' says Diana. 'As a result I decided to restore the relationship with my children, especially to stand by my son Mohamed who lost his leg in the war.'

'I thank Tearfund's partner, because they managed to draw a smile on our faces again, despite all our pain.'

PRAYER FOCUS:

Please do not share these online

- 'On a visit to Lebanon, I met refugees who'd fled the conflict in Syria. Everyone I spoke to asked us to pray for peace. If peace comes, they will return home,' says Nigel Harris, Tearfund's CEO. Please cry out to God for lasting peace in the Middle East.
- Pray for all those refugees who, like Diana, are recovering from loss and trauma beyond what many of us could even imagine. Pray that God will be their comfort and strength.
- Praise God and pray for the transformational work of Tearfund's staff and partners as they do all they can to help those most affected by the war in Syria.

**All names changed.*

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



Two billion people worldwide lack access to waste collection. This damages their health and means plastic has to be burned or dumped in rivers. Please pray that Penny Mordaunt, International Development Secretary, will act to address this issue, and urge Commonwealth leaders to do the same when they meet in April.



The violence in Brazil is worsening at an alarming rate, with more than 60,000 people assassinated every year. The authorities are attempting to tackle this via the military, which is causing fear and anxiety, especially among slum communities. Pray for peace, for those affected, and for our partners seeking to bring transformation where it's needed most.



Widespread food insecurity remains in Yemen. A blockade, which has heavily restricted essential imports such as food and fuel, has devastated the country. The humanitarian impact has been catastrophic, and without improved access the food situation is expected to deteriorate. Please pray for the people of Yemen, for the free flow of aid supplies, and for our partners, who are working in an incredibly challenging context. *(Please do not share this prayer point online.)*