

ONE VOICE

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

CUTTING THEIR CLOTH

George was without hope. He could not feed his family or send his children to school. The income that he and his wife were earning from their small tailoring business wasn't enough.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. George had moved with his family from Gakenke in the North of Rwanda to Karambi in the East because in Gakenke they were struggling with poverty. In Karambi they hoped to find a more profitable life, but their dreams hadn't been realised.

George's wife had a sewing machine and made clothes for people at the trading centre. He says, 'We depended on this business for every need, including food, as we did not have land. My wife taught me how to make clothes with her machine so I could help her, but we were still very poor as we did not have money to purchase cloth. The business was not going well.'

A special visit

In May 2016 Tearfund partner Moucecore visited his local Pentecostal church. They spoke of how people's lives can be transformed by self-help groups. George and his wife were encouraged by this and soon joined one of the groups.

Facilitators from the church taught them how to save as a group and soon each member was saving 500 Rwandan francs (Rwf), equivalent to five pence a week. For George and his wife it meant they had to save 1000 Rwandan francs in total, and they found this very hard.

But after seven months of consistent saving, they were able to borrow 150,000 Rwf (£150) in January 2017. They used this to buy two more sewing machines and increase their stocks of cloth. Their business was starting to take off, and soon they had an order from a local school to make uniforms.

A good balance

When they were paid, they were able to pay off their credit with the self-help group immediately. They took an additional loan so George could start a hardware business – a wise and profitable move as there was soon great demand for his services.

George says the numbers speak for themselves: 'My capital is now about 2,500,000 Rwf (£2,500). It is not easy to imagine such a profit in just six months – starting from nothing. But when God blesses the work of your hands it happens.

'There is no magic to it; it's joining up with others and bringing our resources together that has propelled us to where we are now. I have hope for the future and I'm planning to construct my own house within two years.

'We no longer consider ourselves poor as we can afford the necessities of life. Other members of our self-help group have also overcome poverty. To have a bank account was a dream to us, but now we have one. Praise be to God! Poverty is not incurable; poverty can be defeated!'

PLEASE PRAY:

- Thank God for the transformation in George and his family's life, from poverty to hope.
- Ask God to help George's story to be spread far and wide, encouraging those families in Rwanda who are feeling helpless.
- Pray for the work of Tearfund and its partners, including Moucecore, who are working with local churches.

A NOTE FROM...

'I've been on several overseas trips with Tearfund and I've seen self-help groups in action. They are truly amazing and life-transforming. George and his family have gone from poverty to hope – and theirs is just one of many similar stories. Thank you for supporting this work with your prayers.' **Andrew Horton, News Editor**

FIFTY YEARS, FIFTY COUNTRIES: HAITI

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 Haiti.

The Caribbean nation of Haiti is vibrant and resilient, with a rich history of overcoming oppression. However, it has struggled to develop, due to a combination of corruption and vulnerability to natural disasters.

Tearfund has been working in Haiti for many years, and has built strong relationships with local churches and communities. Our local staff team and their partners work with communities so that they are better able to withstand the effects of disaster. Together they're finding creative solutions to the challenges of poverty.

Agents of change

A recent initiative has an exciting focus on mobilising young people across Haiti to address injustices and bring development to their communities. In July 2017, the Kingdom Come conference saw 120 young Christians learning how the good news of Jesus brings transformation to the whole of our lives; not only spiritually, but also the way we live and how we care for our neighbours.

Melissa (25) grew up in Port au Prince, Haiti, and has been an intern with Tearfund there. She helped organise the conference and brims with enthusiasm for what can be achieved.

'This has taught me a lot about social justice and what we can do to change the situations in our communities,' says Melissa. 'Sometimes this generation is turned in on itself, but we need to look to our neighbours and see how we can be an answer to the world's problems.'

Melissa is the youngest of three sisters and grew up in a christian family. But she explains that it was only when she learned the truth of God's love and plan for her life that she wholeheartedly committed herself to him.

First steps

As Melissa has been exposed to the ideas of social justice and the call to serve the poor, she has realised that we all have a role to play in bringing hope to our communities.

'It has shown me that, as a young person, my voice counts. And there are things, maybe small things, but things I can do to make a change in my community and my country,' she says.

She worked as a Sunday school teacher for four years, and realised that the children attending were coming from very different situations. 'You could have a child who could not eat on Sunday morning, who would come and sit next to a child who ate last night and again ate breakfast,' she explained. 'You have them in the same room, but they're not living the same realities.'

Showing God's love

Almost a quarter of Haitians live in extreme poverty, with half of all households lacking consistent access to nutritious food.

As Melissa raised this situation with others, a woman in her church was moved to begin providing breakfast for the children. 'She prepares everything – buys it all – and I take it from her and serve it to the children every Sunday,' says Melissa. 'We've been doing it since February and it's changed a lot, not only for the children but also for me in seeing that we can make a difference.'

Melissa is also something of a star baker. She bakes fabulous cookies and is exploring how she could start a business that would enable her to do more. 'I don't want to start a business to make money, but I really want God to show me how to use it for the community – maybe I could sell the cookies and send more children to school.'

'We are the ones who can be world changers and bring change to our communities,' she says. 'We have the power and ability and strength to make things happen. God has a plan for us, for the youth here in Haiti and for the youth around the world.'

PLEASE PRAY:

- Praise God for the young people who attended the conference. Pray that the things they have learned will translate into initiatives to transform communities all over Haiti.
- Pray that God will raise up more young people like Melissa who understand the call for the church to reach out to their communities.

- Pray for families who struggle to put food on the table. Pray that they will find help and support to increase their income and access the facilities they need.

A TALE OF TWO FLOODS

On 4 May last year, Jacob Sarker started his new role as Tearfund's Country Representative for Bangladesh. On 30 May, Cyclone Mora hit the south of the country. On 12 June, monsoon rain triggered landslides and floods in three districts in the south-east. Later in June, more rains caused devastation and a further eight northern districts were flooded.

The conditions triggered mudslides in southeastern Bangladesh. The rain intensified over the next month – across India, Nepal and Pakistan as well as Bangladesh. By 2 September an estimated 45 million people were affected. During the worst days of the floods, more than one-third of Bangladesh was under water.

Meanwhile, a different flood was coming to the south of Bangladesh – a surge of people. Myanmar families from the Rohingya ethnic group were forcibly displaced by violence in Northern Rakhine State. By October, an estimated 700,000 people fled to escape appalling atrocities, including having family members killed before their eyes.

Exhausted people faced perilous journeys. Most arrived in Cox's Bazar, a town on the south east coast, desperately needing food, water, sanitation, shelter, medical and trauma care. This was the background to Jacob's first six months at Tearfund. 'I always do a lot of hard work, but last year was harder,' he says.

'If you follow Jesus, he will provide for you'

But that's not to say there hasn't been a huge cost to Jacob. 'One day in September, while visiting the displaced Myanmar nationals in the camps, I spoke on the phone to Steve Collins [Tearfund's head of the Asia region]. Steve suggested I take a break. I told him I would rest when I knew that we were responding to the Rohingya people. It was painful to see their situation. I was in tears.'

Thanks to your support, we've been helping to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. 'When we went back to the camps it was such a relief,' says Jacob. 'I felt so much peace in my heart to see the progress. I still saw a lot of pain but I was thankful to know that we were able to help.'

Tearfund now has two partners responding in the Kutupalong-Balukhali camp: Coastal Association for Social Transformation (COAST) Trust, and Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB). But when the Rohingya crisis began to unfold, we had no established partners in that area of Bangladesh

'I did not realise the crisis was going to be that big,' says Jacob. 'I could have decided that because we have no partners we would not respond. But I never thought like that because I was depending on the Lord. If you follow Jesus, he will provide for you.'

Bringing childhood back

At the camp, Jacob met with a young mother, Anuwara, who was forcibly displaced from Myanmar. She now lives in a flimsy bamboo-and-plastic-sheeted shack with her two young daughters, Mumtaz, aged four, and Razia, aged three. People are desperate to tell their stories. Before I even ask a question, Anuwara tells us, 'My husband was killed. He went to collect food and he was shot. So we just fled that day.'

Anuwara is sat in front of Jacob cradling her two children – their faces have a look somewhere between vacant and traumatised. 'The children are used to people being killed,' Anuwara continues. 'When people ask where their father is they say he's been shot.' So many of their friends have experienced the same – it is normal for them.

But, thanks to your support, Tearfund's partner CCDB are building child-friendly spaces – protection facilities for children – so that mothers like Anuwara can take their children to rest and enjoy being children again.


'The biggest strength of Tearfund is the prayer support from around the world,' Jacob concludes. 'The support staff in the UK, and all those praying for us around the world. It has a very big impact. I felt it.'


PLEASE PRAY:


- Lift up all those who lost loved ones, homes and livelihoods in the floods. Pray for God's comfort, protection and provision.
- Pray for the Rohingya people. Pray that humanitarian organisations like Tearfund will be able to continue to support them, and pray for a political solution to the crisis.
- Pray for God to strengthen Jacob and his team as they work in these physically and emotionally challenging conditions.

This is an extract from an article in the May 2018 edition of Tear Times.

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

 Severe rains have led to widespread flooding in central and southern parts of Kenya. Please pray for over 200,000 people who have been forced to flee their homes. Pray for everyone affected, for protection of livelihoods and homes, and that people will be able to return to their homes safely.

 Next week we're holding an important training event in Sierra Leone. We'll be equipping a new generation of leaders from across West Africa, to empower more churches to lift their communities out of poverty. Please pray that the event will be a success, and that it will be a catalyst for transformation in West Africa.

 Two workers from the charity Medair have been killed in South Sudan. Please pray for their families and colleagues at this difficult time, and for the safety of others working in this country, including Tearfund's staff and partners. Pray also for the lasting peace and stability so desperately needed by the people of South Sudan.