

# ONE VOICE

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

## **A MARRIAGE (RE)MADE IN HEAVEN**

Robert\* was an alcoholic. He didn't want the life, or the family, that he had. His wife Elizabeth\* and their four children lived in poverty. Elizabeth did what she could to keep the home their family fed and clothed, but Robert spent the little money they did have on drink, risking his health and the future of his children.

The family felt humiliated; what was happening was clearly seen by the rest of their village in northern Uganda. Elizabeth says that when Robert was drunk, he would beat her. If she heard him coming home, she would escape and climb up a tree to hide from him. She frequently ended up spending the night in the tree, too afraid to climb down.

### **Faith, hope and love**

When Tearfund's partner, the Diocese of Kitgum (DoK), came to the Kemba's village, Robert and Elizabeth became one of more than 700 married couples who took part in a training course called Faithful House. The course is designed to improve relationships between husbands and wives for the good of their family and wider community.

The idea of Faithful House isn't just to save marriages, though. The rate of prevalence for HIV is still worryingly high in the region, despite years of intervention. The Diocese realised that, to make a real difference, they needed to tackle some of the dangerous cultural norms in the area. These included polygamy, early or forced marriage and high-risk behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse and promiscuity. In short, if you nurture faithfulness and respect, then, to an extent, sexual health issues begin to look after themselves.

### **A fresh start**

The training and counselling Robert and Elizabeth received has completely transformed their marriage. Robert feels relieved and free.

'This training was God's plan for my family,' says Robert. 'It was an eye-opener for us, and totally transformed our marriage. I have seen the Lord delivering me from being a slave to drinking. We are happy and are planning and working together to transform our situation.'

There are plenty of ways they will be able to do this. Vulnerable couples like Robert and Elizabeth are receiving special training and support, to help them generate a proper income. They'll learn

about how to join a local savings scheme and receive training in business skills, agriculture and financial management.

The couple went on to have a church wedding at the end of the course – something they didn't originally have. It was an important statement for the couple; God was now at the heart of their marriage.

Although his friends hated him for deserting their drinking group, his family is peaceful and Elizabeth no longer has to sleep up a tree.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Lift up all the families like Robert and Elizabeth's attending the Faithful House training. Pray that they will grow in their understanding, and their marriages and families will be transformed.
- Pray that, through this and other initiatives, people in this region of Uganda will be able to talk openly about HIV and how it is contracted.
- Pray for all the vulnerable individuals and couples who are learning ways they can save money and make a living, to escape their extreme poverty.

\*Names have been changed to protect identities.

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

'It's inspiring to see families like Robert and Elizabeth's restored, and equipped to build a better life. Please continue to pray for the people of Uganda, and Tearfund's staff and partners in this country. Your prayers do make a difference. Thank you!'

**Donald Mavanduse, Head of Tearfund's work in Southern and East Africa**

## **FIFTY YEARS, FIFTY COUNTRIES: HONDURAS**

*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 Honduras.*

**The Central American nation of Honduras is known for its rich natural resources, including vast swathes of magnificent forest. However, years of military rule, corruption, inequality, violent crime and natural disasters have made Honduras one of the most dangerous, and least developed countries in Central America.**

Tearfund began working in Honduras in the 1970s, in response to hurricanes and the flight of refugees from neighbouring civil wars. In the 1990s one of the key areas of work was in the fight for the land rights of the indigenous Miskito people.

### **A right to land**

The leaders of the Miskito were lobbying the government for land rights to protect their lifestyle and environment. Tearfund's partner MOPAWI (Agency for the Development of the Mosquitia) and our supporters joined them in their fight. A logging agreement in 1991 and plans for a hydro-electric dam in 1998 were both overturned.

Osvaldo Munguía, Director of MOPAWI, has lobbied, persuaded and prayed for his people for three decades, despite many challenges to his own safety. Since 2012, 10,000 square kilometres have been given to the indigenous people of La Mosquitia.

'When we started, things seemed to be so hard that I was convinced I would not see the results,' says Osvaldo. 'I am so privileged that God has kept me here to see with my own eyes the results of all those efforts.'

Together with our local partners, we remain committed to strengthening marginalised communities, addressing environmental issues, training and equipping local churches to tackle local problems (especially access to healthcare), and advocating for land rights, in particular for indigenous peoples.

### **Tackling violence**

However, a new issue has developed. A culture of violence has dominated much of Honduras, and indeed Central American society in recent years. A UN report released in 2014 determined that Honduras had the highest homicide rate in the world.

This is in large part due to the presence of drug trafficking and youth gangs or 'maras', but there's a bigger picture.

'It's a complicated situation,' explains Alexis Pacheco, who leads Tearfund's work in Central America. 'During the civil wars in the region many escaped to the US, but in the '90s large numbers were deported back. Many of these young people had never even lived in Honduras and found themselves surviving in the slums, using the skills they had learned in gangs in the US.'

Add to this high unemployment, corruption – even in the church – the disintegration of families and the insufficient law enforcement resources, and violence has become endemic.

'The community was not well-prepared to face this level of violence,' says Alexis. 'As a pastor said to me some weeks ago, "No theological school taught me how to face the trauma." How do you minister to a family whose son is murdered?'

But there are churches reaching out into the poorest areas, and this gives Alexis great hope for his nation.

'I feel very happy that some churches start to take practical action to protect young people; to teach and share, to give spaces of protection and spaces to deal with trauma, and to create hope. One of my heroes is called Pastor Mario – together with his church they decided to work with the youth. His weapons are his Bible and his faith, and with them he is facing the trauma and bringing solutions.'

- Praise God for men like Osvaldo and Mario who serve their communities no matter the cost. Pray for the safety of church and community leaders as they take the initiative to support communities and pray for more to become involved.
- Pray for an end to the violence in Honduras. Pray for the government and local authorities to have wisdom to tackle both the violence and the corruption that allows it to continue.
- Pray for Tearfund and our partners as we seek to support pastors and churches to meet the needs of their communities. Pray for the work with young people, in healthcare, with indigenous groups and in building livelihoods.

If you'd like to know more please visit our Honduras page at [www.tearfund.org/honduras](http://www.tearfund.org/honduras) And if you've missed any other articles in this series you can find them at [www.tearfund.org/pray](http://www.tearfund.org/pray)

## **WHY I WON'T STOP SERVING IN BURUNDI**

**Desire Majambere is a man who won't let the large, looming realities of poverty stand in his way. From an early age he's felt driven to help those who are most vulnerable.**

'I remember going into the camps for internally displaced people during the worst of the wars. I took bread rolls to give out among those in most need – at the time, we didn't know what else to do. God helped keep me safe.'

Now over twenty years later he's working as Tearfund's Country Manager in Burundi, and leads our work alongside two partner organisations.

### **A challenging context**

Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world. It struggles both politically and economically and has had a turbulent history since independence in 1962.

Tearfund has worked in the land-locked East African nation for many years, but the recent political turmoil has made this even harder. It has also meant around 415,000 people have left their homes for neighbouring countries.

On 17 May, there will be a referendum where President Pierre Nkurunziza is seeking constitutional change, which will potentially allow him to remain in power until 2034.

Desire says, 'We pray to God that the social and political situation improves – and for Tearfund and its partners to have a safe and secure environment, so they can continue being salt and light in vulnerable communities.'

### **Restless history**

Desire has early memories of a family bent towards compassion:

'When I was young, I watched how my parents and grandparents were always helping people. People would come to our house for help, and my family would share food and lend out our land. I guess helping people is in my blood!'

After a spell working as an auditor in an office in Bujumbura, he began to feel uncomfortable. He soon realised that the root of this was that his job was to help people, 'I felt passionate about serving people in need,' says Desire.

He started by doing voluntary work, before going to study community development in Cameroon for two years.

Returning to Burundi, he served with the Anglican Diocese of Matana for nearly 20 years, through times of national conflict and crisis. He started as Country Manager for Tearfund in 2017.

### **Not stopping**

So what keeps Desire going, amidst the challenging context he works in?

'I am inspired by God, because he has called me to serve, to be salt and light. That's what motivates me. I want to help others, to see them overcome poverty.'

'It's amazing to hear people testify about the change happening in their lives... to tell me, "I am no longer a beggar!" People greet me as a friend. They show me the colour of their children's hair – that it is no longer discoloured by malnutrition. They tell me their children are back in school. This makes me feel proud and happy. Sometimes, I have given my own money to help people travel to hospital.'

'There are people suffering and dying here, not because they are lazy or forgotten by God, but because of the situation here. It is not their fault, but it is still killing them. If you help a dying person, you are not just saving their life physically, you are giving them hope for the future. We're not doing what we're doing to be paid back, but because we're motivated by God.'

### **The scale of need**

The shortage of food is critical in many areas of Burundi, leading to hunger and malnutrition.

- One in six children chronically malnourished
- One in four people food insecure
- 7.3 million people living below the poverty line (65% of the population)

Desire is acutely aware of the scale of the need. And he knows the agency for this change is the local church – God's people in action.


'I thank all Tearfund supporters in the UK. You are helping people you don't know, and I want to say thank you. You are helping us to be salt and light in this place.


'Pray for us as we look to build the capacity of local churches, so that not as much outside help is needed. 'I will keep on doing what I'm doing to improve things in Burundi.'


#### **PRAYER FOCUS:**

- Pray for peace and restoration in Burundi, particularly with the upcoming referendum on 17 May.
- Lift up those who are struggling in the current food crisis and pray that God will provide for their needs.
- Pray for God's wisdom and protection for Desire and our partner organisations.

#### **PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

 Please pray for the people of Venezuela, where an economic crisis and resulting food shortages are driving an estimated 40,000 people a day into neighbouring countries. The poorest people, including indigenous groups, are most vulnerable. Pray for stability and protection for those displaced.

 Please pray for Iraq's Parliamentary elections, which are planned for 12 May. Pray for a peaceful and fair election process. (Please do not share this prayer point online).

 Peru has issued a new law on climate change, the first of its kind in South America. A number of Tearfund's partners and friends have been lobbying for this law, which will benefit vulnerable people as well as the local environment. Praise God for this progress.