

ONE VOICE

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

GETTING OUT OF A JAM

You've got to look very hard to find any hope in Madzangina. The village is in a remote part of the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Life here is tough: there are no roads, and the area has a history of violence – with women and girls often targeted. Women suffer in the home and the community too, as gender-based violence is commonplace.

Meet Davina

Davina, aged 30, lives in the village, and relies on farming to provide for her six children. 'Life around here is hard,' says Davina. 'We do not have a market in the village for our produce, so we are short of money.'

'Short of money' doesn't even begin to cover it. Davina's family struggle to source even the basics, including food. She can only afford to send one of her children to school. 'If we can sell our farm produce, then we can pay for the school,' she says.

A sticky situation

It seemed like nothing would change for Davina, but hope came to her family when staff from Tearfund and our local partner, Action Entraide, invited her to a very unusual workshop...

Sabine from Tearfund had noticed that an abundance of guava fruit was growing in Madzangina. A lot of the fruit was going to waste, as it couldn't be stored. Whatever wasn't eaten would be left to rot.

Sabine came up with a plan to utilise this God-given – and free – resource. It could be made into jam – which keeps for much longer and can be sold for a profit in a nearby village. She organised a workshop to share this idea with local women like Davina.

A recipe for change

Davina was inspired by the jam-making demonstration. 'It was easy to make,' she says. 'You cut up the guavas and put them in a pot, mix and crush and strain them through a cloth. Then you heat and stir, let it cool then add sugar and a little water. Then you heat it again, slowly, until it thickens.'

Taken with the idea, Davina tried it again at home the next day. 'If I work hard, I can make jam,' she says. 'If I make jam I can help my children. I would love to do that because it would bring in extra money.'

For Davina, the possibilities are endless. 'Making jam will improve my life. It could help to educate my children, provide for our daily needs. Maybe one day I can build a house...'

The benefits of jam making have encouraged Davina to see the potential in the resources around her. 'I was surprised,' she says. 'We see guava as something with no value or use. We were amazed when we learnt you can make it into jam.'

Not only does this give women like Davina a new way to earn a living, it helps restore their self-belief and confidence, crucial in a country where women are too often abused and treated as second-class citizens.

PLEASE PRAY:

*Father God,
We praise and thank you for filling us with the potential to bring about change in our own lives, and help others to do the same in theirs. We thank you for Davina's new hope, and we pray for her future. We ask that you'll strengthen and guide Tearfund's staff and partners as they come alongside communities like Madganzina and empower them to push back against poverty. In your name we pray,
Amen.*

*Name changed to protect identity.

Speaking of jam, Tearfund's new Big Bake pack is ready to order for free at www.tearfund.org/bigbake Every pound raised at every bake sale can help people like Davina, so please join us.

A NOTE FROM...

'Who would expect that something as simple as a jar of jam could change someone's life! Davina's story is a great reminder of the potential and resources that God has given each of us.' **Liz Green, Community Fundraising Team**

FIFTY YEARS, FIFTY COUNTRIES: INDIA

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 India.

Famine was declared in the Indian state of Bihar on 20 April 1967, followed by catastrophic floods. An emergency call to the Evangelical Alliance from Dr Ben Wati of the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) was one of the triggers that led to the formation of Tearfund.

In 1971 the birth of the new nation of Bangladesh resulted in an influx of refugees to India and, with the encouragement of Tearfund and other agencies, EFI launched its own relief committee, EFICOR.

The relationship with EFICOR is a thread through our entire history in India, laying a foundation in the earliest days for working with local partners wherever possible.

Battling to feed the family

India has one of the highest levels of poverty in South Asia, and experiences frequent disasters, exacerbated by the impact of climate change. Over the last 50 years Tearfund has responded to many of these, but has also worked with partners to build resilience within communities so that they are able to cope better on their own.

In recent years, EFICOR has been running a project in the Jhansi District of Uttar Pradesh, working with 20 of the most vulnerable villages.

‘The prevalence of caste discrimination alongside illiteracy and ignorance results in increased vulnerability of these families,’ explains Prince David, who leads Tearfund’s work in India. ‘It exposes them to the worst forms of exploitation, like unsafe migration, deaths due to malnutrition, and even farmers committing suicide in some parts of the country.’

Impoverished farmers struggle to grow crops on the rocky soil in this drought-prone, arid region, and are forced to depend on daily labour or migrate for their living.

Vijay* is 43 years old and lives in one of the villages. He owns one acre of barren land on a slope. Soil erosion and the lack of water meant that his field produced little. He had to move to the city during lean periods to find work.

So much rice

Initially, he showed no interest in the work that EFICOR was doing in his village to raise awareness, form farmers groups and mobilise the community. However, as his family's condition deteriorated, he began to engage with the project team.

He learned new agricultural techniques and understood the importance of adapting to climate change. He was given help to level his land and was provided with rice seedlings. The villagers also started managing the water flow for irrigating the paddy fields so that erosion was managed.

The change is profound. ‘I have never seen so much rice growing on this land in before,’ exclaims Vijay. He and his family are now confident of their food supply and Vijay no longer needs to leave home to look for work. He is an inspiration to other farmers and can be seen encouraging others to adopt the techniques he has learned.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Praise God for EFICOR and all our partners in India, for their commitment and perseverance in difficult circumstances and for their passion to see the most vulnerable given opportunities.

- Pray for communities like Vijay's as they learn how to cope with climate change and the danger of droughts and floods. Pray for good harvests, for protection and for growing relationships with local authorities.
- 12.6 million children work as child labourers in India. Please pray for the success of the work being done by our partners to address child trafficking.

RENEWAL FROM RUBBLE

To mark Tearfund's 50th birthday The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, spoke at a special service in Coventry Cathedral – a building that was almost totally destroyed in World War Two and then rebuilt. This is a slightly shortened version of his address on that day.

Aid agencies and NGOs are going through a torrid time. We hear of the news of staff that fail, of governments that steal, of wars that destroy, of power-seeking that disregards the poor.

And so it is no surprise that this passage from Isaiah 61 appears sometimes to be mere building of castles in the air. The pragmatist, the critic of aid spending, says, 'No, concentrate on here, on us, on me, on our needs, on the struggles of my community at home, for we cannot change what happens elsewhere.'

So, equally, were some of the comments of those who heard the words of Isaiah 61 for the first time in the slave labour camps of Babylon, or the second time in their greatest proclamation in Jesus' mouth in Luke 4, for in the opening declaration of his ministry, he was clearly proclaiming the Year of Jubilee.

You can hear his listeners thinking, 'Who's this anyway? It's all very well, but look at the realities.' For there is nothing new about the real day-to-day struggles of everyone's lives obscuring the long term, or the real local needs overwhelming the cries of the distant poor. It is a conundrum that is as old as time. Yet its great fault is that it leaves God out of the equation.

Recalculating...

Tearfund works on the basis of putting God back into the calculation. For Tearfund calls us to the response that amplifies the distant voices and takes all human beings to a different level of relationship in which those distant voices are heard clearly in our ears.

Isaiah 61 was taken up by Jesus at the very start of his ministry and we are here to celebrate that through 50 years, you have lived it. In what you do, you demonstrate that the reductionist and rationalist materialism which inserts the measure of distance and familiarity into the calculation of benefit and says that the far away and unfamiliar don't count for much, that calculation that sees the world in terms of exchange and scarcity, leads to disaster.

I am so pleased that we are here in this cathedral, for its very stones speak of that good news of God's recalculation of our miscalculations.

Stone by stone

But in practice, all of us know that that recalculation means hard, discouraging and dangerous work. It means doing a million small things that, together, usher in the kingdom of God. When that Cathedral burned, and you look at the photos of the next day, the rubble is feet high above people's reach. Where did they start? They began to clear the rubble one piece at a time. They picked up nails that had fallen from the burning beams and, to remind themselves what hope was, they made crosses from them. They imagined the new.

Basil Spence, the architect here, was caught in a fox hole under fire in the Second World War after the Normandy landings, and the person sharing his foxhole said, words to the effect of, 'If we survive this, what will you do after the war?' And Basil Spence said, 'I will build a cathedral.' Well that was a bit brave. There hadn't been one built since the 17th Century.

He tells how he stood in those ruins when the competition for the design started, and the image of what we now see just dropped into his mind. Clearing the rubble, imagining the new with the gift of the Spirit of God, building it stone by stone, piece by piece, glass window by glass window.

How do we do that? 'Oh yes, we are not going to give up,' says Emmanuel – God with us – 'until poverty is abolished.' And the cynic whose voice I took in the early bits of this address says, 'Oh yeah, great, that's a lifetime's occupation, and your grandchildren's too!'

Relationship Jubilee

How do we do it? It always begins, as Tearfund knows so well, with our relationship with God. Reconciliation of relationships with God is not an add-on; it is the only source of life, energy and vision.

And the clearing of the rubble, the building of our new world continues with recognising that relationship with God draws us into relationship with all God's people. It means that the smallest and the least in the eyes of the world, in the power of the Spirit, are part of God's action. This is how Tearfund works: in partnership with local Christians and local churches.

The year of Jubilee was the 49th year when all land returns to its original owners, when all debts are wiped, when the slate is wiped clean and an entire nation has got the chance to start again. Jubilee was about the entire nation, but in Jesus' mouth, it becomes about the entire world. The Spirit of God is upon me and it is in the power of the Spirit that we bring jubilee to the whole world.




Two sets of prisoners

Jubilee therefore is about freedom and release. It is freedom for all captives whether to the sinful structures of slavery, of debt, poverty and injustice. But let us remember that action to release the poor also releases those captive to wealth, to power, to their own want and need for money and security. Jubilee blesses all. It can as easily transform the powerful and rich as the weak and poor. Of course, one problem is that the rich and powerful do not always, or even often, welcome liberation from their golden chains.

That is why we celebrate the gift of Tearfund to church and to world. You bring gifts and inspiration, you go on proclaiming the Year of Jubilee. You transform our vision of God, of his creation, of the restoration of all things in right and just relationships. May God grant you the next 50 years with resources and vision to match the last.

On Sunday 27 May, we're uniting Christians and churches around the world to lift their voices in prayer to end extreme poverty, and pray a prayer written especially by Justin Welby. Please [join us!](#)

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

-  Please continue to pray for Yemen. The World Health Organisation has warned that cholera cases are likely to increase with the onset of the rainy season. Aid agencies are preparing. Pray that ongoing violence and political unrest will not prevent help from reaching those who need it most. (Please do not share this prayer point online.)
-  Peace talks are being held in South Sudan from 17 to 21 May. Please pray that these talks will be fruitful, leading to lasting peace. Pray also for the long-suffering people of South Sudan – that God will provide for their needs and restore their hope.
-  Please pray for the swift containment of an Ebola outbreak in north-west Democratic Republic of Congo. Pray for the recovery of those who are ill and for the safety of those working among them (Tearfund does not have partners in this area).