

ONE VOICE

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

LACK OF TOILETS IS OUT OF ORDER

Over two billion people around the world lack access to a safe, clean toilet of their own. It's bad news for every one of those people. However, it has the greatest impact on the 1.25 billion women and girls.

To mark World Toilet Day (19 November), here are two short stories of how life is shaped for women by access to (or lack of) a simple latrine.

Dreaming of different

In Bridget's village in Rukungiri, Uganda, education is highly prized. 'When I finish school, I want to become a nurse,' says Bridget aged 14. 'I need to stay healthy.' Until recently, teenage girls watched their ambitions wither when they started their period.

Old toilets at the local primary school were virtually unusable, so teenage girls missed class for a week each month – many left school altogether. Early marriage was a more realistic prospect than a medical career. 'If we felt sick, we'd miss class and that would affect our performance in exams,' says Bridget.

Bridget's prospects were transformed by a new toilet block with girls' changing rooms built by a Tearfund partner. Within three months, 65 girls re-enrolled in class.

A flush of excitement

Without a toilet, Purna from Sikre in Nepal almost died of diarrhoea. It took a day to reach hospital: her son, Bishwo, carried her on his back. 'The doctor told us if we'd waited, we'd have lost our mother,' he says.

When he attended Tearfund partner's sanitation workshops, Bishwo realised his latrine was contaminating a stream used for drinking water.

He used savings and sold two goats to pay for a new, non-polluting toilet – and invited neighbours to his Toilet Open Day. He told them they should build loos too and thankfully many more in his village have.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Pray for women and girls like Bridget and Sikre who are suffering from lack of a safe toilet and adequate sanitation.
- At current rates of progress, the world will not reach its goal to 'ensure access to clean water sources and sanitation for all by 2030' (as stated in the sixth Sustainable Development Goal). Pray for renewed efforts by world leaders to meet this goal.

To mark World Toilet Day, Toilet Twinning is inviting women and girls to join their Big Squat on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral on Monday 19 November – in solidarity with the 1 billion women and girls worldwide who still don't have a safe, proper toilet. Find out more at www.toilettwinning.org

A NOTE FROM...

'The impact of safe water and sanitation, and good hygiene, is huge. It effects the core of our well-being, not just our physical health, but our dignity, education, time to be creative, our productivity, our household income, and the health of our environment. May God help us in protecting and stewarding our precious resources.'

Frank Greaves – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Lead

FIFTY YEARS, FIFTY COUNTRIES: THAILAND

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 Thailand.

Thailand is known for its beauty and is often referred to as the 'land of smiles', due to the friendliness of its people. But it has its problems too, with more than 12 per cent of the population living on less than £1.45 a day.

Tearfund first started working in Thailand in 1979, helping supply emergency aid to refugees from Laos and Cambodia. Today, we work through one partner in Thailand, focusing on issues including livelihood. Empowering local churches to be agents of change in their local communities is another priority for our partners, as demonstrated in Mae Chan district, northern Thailand...

Untapped potential

Despite Thailand being predominantly Buddhist, there are a number of churches, especially in the north. Traditionally, the primary purpose of most Thai churches is to preach and convert, with little emphasis on practical action.

'They don't focus on holistic ministry like Jesus Christ does in the New Testament,' says Kaiwan Nirattikun from our partner, Mekong Minority Foundation (MMF). 'This has led to many churches being ineffective, with little growth and impact.' Tearfund's partners are passionate about seeing this change, through our Church and Community Transformation (CCT) work, inspiring and equipping churches to bring material as well as spiritual transformation in their local communities.

The leaders of Pa Du Church in the rural north were sceptical of this approach when they first met our partner staff. Most of the leadership team were against trying CCT.

Only the pastor and his assistant were on board, and Kaiwan says this was primarily because they viewed it as a good training opportunity! 'They didn't understand the concept,' he says, but they agreed to give it a go.

Potential released

As the Pa Du Church are progressing through CCT training, the pastor and the wider congregation are coming to see the power of the CCT approach to tackling poverty, and are recognising their own God-given potential and calling to bring about change.

Through CCT, the church agreed that illiteracy is a significant problem for the wider community. Most people in Pa Du are unable to read and write, meaning prospects for earning income are extremely limited. Filled with confidence and motivation as a result of CCT, the church leaders went to government officials, and raised the issue. As a result, new literacy classes are now being run by local government, to benefit some of the most vulnerable.

Another issue the church is tackling is land rights. In the past, villagers have seen their family lands taken over by wealthier, more powerful people from other districts, and have felt unable to do anything in response. Working together, the church, village chief and wider community are putting a stop to this unfair practice. Today, the government has officially allocated this land to the villagers, protecting it from being taken over.

Such is the impact of the church now, it is viewed very differently – seen as a source of strength and practical help, integral to the wellbeing of the community.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Give thanks for this inspiring story from Pa Du, and pray that this church will continue to realise its potential to bring material as well as spiritual transformation.
- Lift up those families in Thailand struggling to make a living. Pray they will be able to access the opportunities they need to turn their lives around.
- Pray for the MMF team and the rest of Tearfund's staff and partners working to bring hope and help in this part of the world, wherever the need is greatest.

YOUNG DYNAMO

A twelve-year-old boy cycles 50 miles for our Tsunami appeal. He has a surprising reason for doing it...

Paul Collins cycled 50 miles in a single day to raise money for Tearfund's Indonesia Tsunami Appeal. It's something he feels strongly about, as he has personally survived two earthquakes.

Back in 2015, Paul was living with his family in Nepal when two major earthquakes struck the country, killing nearly 9,000 people and leaving millions facing hardship. 'When the first earthquake struck I was in church,' says Paul. 'At first I just thought it was a tremor but as everyone left the building I realised it was much more than that.'

'During the following weeks and months there were many aftershocks, and just after I had started school again a second earthquake struck.

During much of this time we had been sleeping in the garden under a tarpaulin because it was too dangerous to sleep in our house.'

Spokes-boy for a generation

When he returned to the UK in the summer of 2015 with his parents Steve and Jude, who both work for Tearfund, Paul didn't forget his experience in Nepal. He took part in his first sponsored cycle when he was only nine years old – keen to help rebuild the country he had just left. He set off on a 100-mile ride across north Yorkshire, raising more than £4,000 in sponsorship for Tearfund's Nepal Earthquake appeal.

Paul's latest cycle was slightly more modest in its ambition, but is still a challenge. He cycled from Tearfund's offices in Teddington to Brighton. Paul managed the 50-mile ride in just over eight hours.

Unlike last time, he's cycling for a nation he has never visited, let alone lived. However he says, the news of the tsunami still had a big impact on him.

'When I heard that an earthquake had struck Indonesia, I could understand how people must have been feeling and I wanted to help. It's like after losing something you love: when you see someone else lose the same thing, you can't just stand there and watch. So I decided to take on this challenge.'

Back in the saddle

Paul says he was persuaded to act again after he learned that the six-metre-high tsunami, triggered by an earthquake, had killed more than 2,000 people. Tearfund is responding to the disaster through a network of Indonesian partners and churches, providing temporary shelters, cooking equipment, blankets, winter clothes, food and hygiene items, as well as repairing water supplies and building latrines and bathing areas.




Paul, who was accompanied on the ride by his parents, says the ride was challenging but hugely satisfying to do.

'When we set off from Teddington we cycled through Bushy Park and saw lots of deer in the mist,' says Paul. 'It was cold at first, but as we left the city the sun came out and it gradually warmed up.'

'The first 25 miles were quite easy and flew by, but the second half of the journey was more challenging, especially as the wind began to pick up. There was one final, very long hill before the great descent into Brighton. I felt relieved and happy when we arrived, and I was looking forward to having fish and chips! We sat on the beach and watched the sun set over the sea.'

Praise God for Paul's amazing efforts; and please continue to pray for people recovering from the tsunami and for all those responding.

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

-  In Central African Republic 12,000 Internally Displaced People have been left in a desperate situation after their camp in the town of Batangafo was burnt down by armed groups. Pray for the security situation that has rapidly deteriorated in recent weeks.
-  The general election in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been postponed twice, but is now planned to take place in December. Many people have died in violent clashes relating to this election so far. Pray for peace in the weeks and months to come.
-  Continue to pray for Rohingya refugees living in camps in Bangladesh. As conversations are held between Myanmar and Bangladeshi leaders, refugees are fearful they will be forced to return against their wishes to unsafe conditions. Pray for calm, for good information and a safe solution to be found.