

ONE VOICE

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

PEOPLE FLEE THEIR HOMES AS VIOLENCE ENGULFS BURKINA FASO

In the last few weeks, the humanitarian crisis in Burkina Faso has escalated dramatically.

According to the UN, nearly half a million people have been affected. Hundreds of thousands of people have fled their homes.

Much of the country has become engulfed in fighting between armed groups, making it hard for Tearfund's partners and other humanitarian workers to reach those most in need.

One of our partners has been forced to stop doing its life-saving work in an area of the Sahel region. Our partners in the north of the country are on high alert because of the security situation.

Deadly persecution

Churches have also been targeted in the attacks. In an interview with Catholic agency ACN last August, Bishop Laurent Dabire of Dori said: 'If the world continues to do nothing, the result will be the elimination of the Christian presence.'

Richard Yao, Tearfund's Country Director for Burkina Faso, says: 'The church is crying out for help. We're praying for the security of all Christian believers, and for freedom of belief in the midst of the shadow of death hanging over the north of the country.'

Tearfund has been working in Burkina Faso since the 1970s, and currently works with five partner organisations across the country.

Join us in prayer for this rapidly developing and concerning crisis.

PLEASE PRAY

- Ask God to be with those people who have been forced from their homes, and pray they will be protected and provided for.
- Pray for all Christians and for our staff and partners as they work in challenging circumstances.
- Lift up the political situation in Burkina Faso as the nation prepares for next year's presidential elections.

A NOTE FROM...

'The situation in Burkina Faso is growing worse. Many farmers have fled their homes, meaning land has not been planted and crucial harvests will be low. Teachers don't feel safe enough to continue their work, and so schools are closing. The wife of my colleague is a nurse, and the

town where she works was attacked last weekend. Thank you for standing with us in prayer for peace and safety, and for Tearfund's work among communities here.'

Ines Bonkougou, West Africa Team

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

***Warning:** the story contains instances of gender-based violence.*

For 15 years Cynthia* was violently abused by her husband. The whole village knew about it and so did the church. Yet no-one spoke out about it. Then, at last, someone listened to her...

There's a proverb in Burundi that states that 'a woman that isn't beaten is like a house that isn't cleaned.' It's one of many such sayings that point to a serious problem of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the country.

If you are a survivor of domestic violence in Burundi, there is often nowhere to turn. This, for a long time, was Cynthia's experience.

Cynthia is 49. She's separated from her husband and lives with her three children in a rural village in Burundi. She got married at 19 and for ten years lived peacefully with her husband. 'Life was good, he was our protector and provider, we were in love,' Cynthia recalls. 'Suddenly he changed and started beating me. I couldn't understand what I did wrong.'

Vicious cycle of abuse

Cynthia lived with her children on the family farm. She cultivated their land and took care of the children. Her husband lived and worked in a nearby city, and only came home at the weekend. It was something she came to dread.

'My husband's colleagues told me that he had another woman in the city. He started bringing her to our house. We would argue and shout at each other and he would start beating me, until I ran to the neighbours for refuge,' she explains. 'I was shocked; I never thought such a thing could happen to me, but what could I do? My children were still young and I had nowhere to go.'

Hidden in plain sight

Cynthia was abused for more than 15 years with the full knowledge of the community. She went to church every Sunday, as well as attending numerous Bible studies and prayer meetings. However, she didn't have anyone to talk to about it, let alone receive support. Like so many women who encounter violence in their home, she felt isolated, angry and hopeless.

In Burundi, there aren't many services for survivors of SGBV. As a result, Tearfund is working with faith groups and faith leaders across Burundi. Together, they are challenging the social norms at the root of violence against women with a special programme called Transforming Masculinities.

They are making sure that survivors have access to the care and support they need. Cynthia was able to join a group in her church with other survivors of SGBV. In 'Dushire imbere Imana' (Let's put God First), the survivors chat and pray together. For Cynthia it was a revelation.

Ending the silence

'When someone takes the time to listen to you, you feel at peace; you know that you are not alone,' she says. 'I'm so happy that God found me and saved me.'

Members of the group formed a savings scheme. They save 500 francs a week (about 17p). This has allowed Cynthia to start a small business at the local market, where she sells staples like rice and maize flour.

Tearfund and the Anglican Church of Burundi have just launched a National Survivors Movement. It means that women (and men) like Cynthia who have survived abuse are empowered to speak out and encourage others in similar situations.

'I was becoming so bitter,' says Cynthia, looking back. 'I don't know what erratic things I would have done if I hadn't joined the group. Today, I feel at peace; I'm ready to move forward with my life.'

PLEASE PRAY

- Violence against women has been described as a 'scar against humanity'. Cry out to God that he may raise up women and men to speak out about this terrible evil.
- Pray for Cynthia and the millions of women who around the world who are still facing gender-based violence.
- And pray that more churches may be transformed from places of shame and silence, into places of refuge and healing.

Visit Restored's website at <https://www.restoredrelationships.org/> to find out more. They aim to transform relationships and end violence against women.

**Name has been changed to protect identity.*

SENDING OUT AN SOS

As the slogan proclaims: 'Coke is it'. However, this 'it' isn't something to be proud of.

Coca-Cola has today been named as the world's biggest polluter of plastic waste. And we want Tearfund supporters like you to give the Coca-Cola Company a cool, refreshing talking-to.

The company produces a staggering 108 billion plastic bottles every year. And that makes them the biggest plastic polluter in the world.

With this in mind, Tearfund supporters, and anyone else concerned about plastic pollution, are being asked to send a message in a bottle to Coca-Cola, as part of our *Rubbish Campaign*.

The campaign has called upon four of the biggest producers of plastic packaging to clean up their act.

PepsiCo, Nestlé and Unilever have all agreed to discuss the issues raised with representatives from Tearfund. Meanwhile, Unilever has pledged to halve the amount of virgin (non-recycled) plastic produced by 2025. Coca-Cola, however, hasn't made any comparable pledge regarding their use of plastic, nor have they yet agreed to meet with us to discuss the

Plastic and poverty

Plastic is a topic close to our hearts at Tearfund, as the worst impact of plastic pollution is on poorer nations, where there are often no official rubbish collection services.

'Multinational companies are selling billions of single-use plastic products in countries where waste isn't collected,' says Joanne Green, Tearfund's Senior Policy Adviser. 'They know that communities will have no choice but to burn it or live among it.'

It's estimated that 1 million people die each year as a result of plastic pollution. Add to that the effect of burning plastic on the climate.

'As the world's biggest plastic polluters, Coca-Cola bears a big responsibility for the mountains of single-use plastic that are making life harder for people in poverty,' says Joanne. 'They need to move away from virgin plastic.'

Here's what to do:

Find a used Coca-Cola branded plastic bottle (including Coke, Sprite, Fanta, Powerade, Innocent, Oasis and Smartwater).

Or:

[Download and print our Message in a bottle letter template at https://www.tearfund.org/about_you/action/coca-cola/](https://www.tearfund.org/about_you/action/coca-cola/)

Then:

Write a message to Coca-Cola on a piece of paper (or your downloaded 'paper bottle'). Include your name and our #RubbishCampaign hashtag.

Send your message (either in a bottle or on paper) to:

Coca-Cola Great Britain
1A Wimpole St
Marylebone, W1G 0EA

Make sure to take a photograph of your message to share on social media, sharing with @Coca-Cola and @Tearfund on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram, along with the hashtag #RubbishCampaign.

Plastic pledges

Over 34,000 people have signed Tearfund's *Rubbish Campaign* petition so far. It calls on four multinational companies: Unilever, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo and Nestlé to make four pledges:

- Report on the number of units of single-use plastic products they sell worldwide in each country by 2020.
- Commit to halve the number of these products by 2025.
- Ensure that one single-use plastic item is collected for every one sold by 2022.
- Work with waste pickers around the world to provide employment with dignity, helping to clean their environments.

Coca-Cola has agreed to commit to collect a bottle or can for every one they sell by 2030 – but that's eight years later than suggested. It's time they put a cap on their plastic production (pun intended).

[Visit our Coca-Cola campaign web page for more details at https://www.tearfund.org/about_you/action/coca-cola/](https://www.tearfund.org/about_you/action/coca-cola/)

PLEASE PRAY

- Thank God for what has been achieved so far through the *Rubbish Campaign*, especially Unilever's pledge to halve the quantity of virgin plastic they produce.
- Pray that Coca-Cola will respond to the call, and pledge to make rapid and radical changes to the way they package their products.
- Thank God for the rubbish pickers and recycling hubs springing up in the world's poorest nations – thanks to the work of local churches, supported by Tearfund. They are creating employment and improving the environment. Pray for these ventures to spread and grow.

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

- ✔ Protests are continuing in Lebanon. People are demanding an end to alleged government corruption and the economic crisis. A general strike has been called for Monday (28 October). Please lift up Lebanon to God and pray for the demonstrations to be peaceful and that people would be protected from any violence.
- ✔ Please pray for the Rohingya people, who fled from Myanmar and are still living in temporary camps in Bangladesh. Pray for wisdom for the Bangladeshi authorities as they look to find safer places for them to live.
- ✔ Please keep the people of Syria in your prayers as violence and conflict continues. Pray especially for those who've had to leave their homes. Lift up Tearfund's staff and partners living and working in Syria and pray for peace across the region.