

ONE VOICE

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

We cannot stay silent: responding to violence against women

Warning: contains mentions of sexual and gender-based-violence that some readers may find upsetting.

For lots of us this year, a significant amount of time has been spent in lockdown. The unfamiliar isolation may have made it feel even longer. For some, trapped in homes where they have been subjected to new levels of violence and abuse, it will have felt interminable...

Staying at home, staying away from others, keeping separate. These are all things that have been enforced at various points this year in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Their goal has been to save lives, but for an increasing number of women and girls, the lockdowns have hidden a different pandemic behind closed doors. Lives have been shattered – and sometimes lost – as the statistics around the incidence of domestic abuse have continued to rise.

We, the church, cannot stay silent

Across the world, Tearfund and our local partners are working to combat injustices such as child marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, and harmful social attitudes toward women and girls which silence their voices and leave them vulnerable to acts of violence.

Jesus came that all may have life to the full (John 10:10). As we follow him, we, the church, are his practical answer to these issues of abuse and discrimination which deny women and girls fullness of life.

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence is a global campaign that runs from 25 November 2020 (International day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to 10 December 2020 (International Human Rights Day).

Please will you pray with us and be encouraged to stand up and speak out against injustice that robs women and girls around the world of their dignity and, often, their lives.

Please pray

Almighty God,

Thank you for your deep love for every one of us. Thank you that you sent your son – a living sacrifice to pay for our freedom from every kind of slavery and oppression. May we take courage to stand up for those who are being denied that freedom. Open our eyes to see injustice, particularly against women and girls at this time. Open our ears to hear their stories. Open our hearts, as the church, to be the place of safety where they can find healing and new hope in you. Amen.

We've put together a prayer resource to help you pray specifically each day. **You can download it at www.tearfund.org/OV16days**

A note from...

'The suffering of women and girls at the hands of abusers must be put to an end. As the church, we have a key role to play – both in prayer and in action. Let our voices rise up against these horrible crimes.'

Sabine Nkusi, Programme Coordinator for Tearfund's sexual and gender-based violence work

The schoolgirl transforming her community in Nepal

Jenu has always had a passion to help those around her. But as a teenager from a poor background, she wasn't sure how she could make a difference.

Jenu lived a quiet life in her small village in Nepal, focusing on her school work. She knew the value of education – her older brother had been forced to drop out of school to help provide for the family – so she studied hard to get good grades.

Despite her own family's financial problems and lack of resources, Jenu longed to do something practical to help others in need. The only problem was that she didn't know where to start.

A small group with big impact

When Jenu was invited to a community group run by Tearfund's local partner, she got the opportunity she had been looking for. The group provided training on how to work together with others in the community to solve problems and improve living conditions.

Jenu became an enthusiastic member of the group, and was eventually asked to help lead it. The group was able to bring the villagers together to discuss and address issues such as road maintenance, safe hygiene practices and helping those in need.

'The changes have made a lasting impact on my family and community,' Jenu shares. She says that she has found a fresh sense of purpose and fulfilment since joining the group. 'Since then I have been supporting families, groups and community activities.'

Acts of kindness

Recently, Jenu came across an elderly man in her village. He was struggling to get around, had no-one to support him, and couldn't afford to buy food.

Due to the training she has received, Jenu felt confident to act quickly and gather others to help. Jenu and four of her friends raised money to buy the man what he needed, and helped him get his groceries and other essentials. Once isolated and alone, suffering in silence, he now enjoys the support and friendship of those in the community.

'It's so inspiring when we see young people like Jenu get involved in our community transformation projects,' says Pranaya Chhetri, who oversees Tearfund's work in Nepal. 'We want to encourage and empower young people to lead in their communities and equip them with vital life skills for the future.'

'The process has motivated me to do such good things,' says Jenu, who is excited to learn more and take part in new community projects. And she's not alone – the villagers have been inspired to dream for a better future and face their challenges together.

Please pray

- Thank God for Jenu, and the transformation she has helped to bring to her community. Pray that she will continue to thrive, along with her village.
- Praise God for our local partner organisations and churches. They are providing life-changing training and resources to thousands of small groups, like Jenu's, around the world. Ask that these groups would continue to multiply and bring hope and unity to even more communities.
- Pray for young people who are affected by poverty. Pray that they will receive the support they need to complete their education, overcome the challenges they face and look forward to a brighter future.

Ethiopia on a knife edge

Political tensions continue to escalate in Ethiopia, especially in the northern region of Tigray. There are reports of violence, including missile attacks. The UN says thousands of people have fled into neighbouring Sudan as the crisis worsens.

Tearfund's Emily Elliot talked to Ephraim Tsegay, Tearfund's Country Director for Ethiopia, about the crisis:

How concerned are you about what's happening in Ethiopia at the moment?

It's very sad. People are going hungry in Tigray and now with communication blackouts, road blockages and locust infestations, the situation will be worsening.

This is the time of year we expect to collect the harvest, but with the worst locust invasion that I have ever seen in my life, the need for humanitarian support will be massive. The army had been engaging with communities to try to eradicate the locusts before the war broke out. The locust invasion was already beyond the capacity of the community, and the escalation of the conflict puts us in a very difficult situation as a nation.

What are people's specific needs at the moment?

There are about 600,000 people in the Tigray region who urgently need food. Currently, with the conflict escalating, there is no access to the region and you cannot fly in or travel by road. You can imagine how people will be suffering.

If the fighting continues, it is likely to force thousands of Ethiopians living in the north to leave their homes for places like the Afar region. This is one of the driest regions in the country. People travel long distances in search of water in the Afar region, so with newly arrived migrants from Tigray, the meagre water resources are likely to be even more limited.

I'm particularly concerned for the young girls, lactating and pregnant mothers and women who are likely to be victims of the war and be displaced. When people are displaced they become vulnerable to abuse, especially girls and women.

How is Tearfund responding?


In this fast-developing crisis we are working with our local partners and churches on the ground to prioritise the most vulnerable people. We will offer psychological support, food and cash to people who have fled their homes. Post-conflict recovery is also very important – we will reach out to communities to restore businesses and means of making a living that have been lost because of the conflict.


What can we pray for?


As a country we are going through a very difficult situation. Please stand with us in prayer. I believe there will be a time where we will have peace, but we need the Lord to intervene at this time. We don't want to see a prolonged war.

- Pray for the most vulnerable groups: girls, women, pregnant and lactating mothers, the elderly, and people with disabilities who will be in very difficult situations due to the ongoing conflict.
- Ask God to guide our country's leaders. Pray that we can make wise decisions as a nation and protect civilians from this ongoing conflict and restore peace in the country.
- Lift up our partners who are working near to the regions where conflict is intensifying. Pray they may have the resources to provide help to people who have fled their homes.

Pray for the world

 The UK government is considering reducing its spending on overseas aid. Please join us in praying for the government as it debates this as part of its spending review on 25 November. Pray that in these difficult times the government would not go back on its commitment to support the most vulnerable and marginalised people around the world.

 Thursday November 19 was World Toilet Day. There are 2 billion people who do not have basic sanitation facilities such as toilets. Pray for all those who are working around the world to improve people's access to clean water and safe sanitation, that will help prevent diseases and help people lift themselves out of poverty.

 In Malawi 2.6 million people now face hunger – and the pandemic is making everything worse. Weather patterns that have guided generations of farmers have changed, which has led to deadly floods and loss of crops. Pray for the work Tearfund is doing to teach families how to farm under these tough conditions to help release them from hunger.