

ONE VOICE

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

How faith leaders enabled a peaceful election in Burundi

Faith leaders can play a crucial role before and after elections. As ambassadors for peace, they can heal the hurts that divide people and promote unity. In last year's election in Burundi, faith leaders were a beacon of hope – showing communities what a peaceful election could look like.

'Earlier this year, 'Before the 2020 Burundi elections, we organised different workshops with faith leaders to equip and engage them to advocate for free, fair and peaceful elections,' shares Désiré Majambere, who leads Tearfund's work in Burundi. 'Elections in Burundi have often been marred by violence. We wanted to show people there was another way.'

Lighting the way

After the Tearfund-run workshops, faith leaders took the message of peace into their communities. A prayer event was organised for the leaders and candidates of the political parties. Sermons on electoral participation and unity were crafted and delivered. Faith leaders even took to the radio so they could reach even more people.

Whole communities were disciplined in peace and reconciliation. And it didn't stop there. After the election, faith leaders continued to hold people together, and communities remained largely calm and peaceful.

Just the beginning

Tearfund recently invited the faith leaders back for another workshop so the leaders could share how it went, and be inspired to continue the conversation about peace within their communities.

'It would be good if faith leaders from all over the world and their churches are actively involved in the electoral process: they have a role to play,' shares Bishop Pontien Ribakare, who attended the training. 'From my experience, I have realised that people have trust in churches and their leaders regarding peacebuilding. Messages of church leaders are well received, and when different religious denominations work together for the same cause, their message is really powerful.'

'I believe that church leaders should be present in everyday life, engage and invest in the peaceful processes in their country,' adds Rev Onesphore Ndayizigamiye. 'They should not be afraid, but step up, because their role is very important.'

Please pray

- Lift up faith leaders across Burundi and pray a blessing on them as they continue to share messages of peace.
- Pray for lasting peace and reconciliation in Burundi.

- Ask God that even more faith leaders around the world will be inspired to champion peace in their communities.

A note from...

'Elections in Burundi were peaceful in many places, with no violence on election days. This shows what can happen when faith leaders work together to promote peace. It was great to catch up with these leaders again and see how committed they are to continuing this journey with their communities. Please keep us in your prayers as we partner with them; this could make a difference in the lives of so many people.'

Désiré Majambere, Country Director for Burundi

A short guide to intercessory prayer

Tearfund's Rachael Adams shares a guide to how we can pray for people around the world.

Our world is broken. We only have to turn on the TV or switch on our phones to see news alerts showing us the latest tragedy. And there are many more stories that don't get media attention. But God is at work in the midst of the chaos. And through prayer we can join him in bringing healing to our broken world.

But how do we do this? The term most Christians would use is *intercessory prayer*, which just means praying to God for other people.

The Bible is full of examples of people praying to God on behalf of other people. And we can be encouraged because many of these stories include answers to prayers.

In the Old Testament, we are told that God heard the cries of the Israelites before setting them free (Exodus 3:7). Moses spent days praying to God on behalf of Joshua and the Israelites who were on the battlefield (Exodus 17). The prophets – Ezekiel, Joel, Deborah, Habakkuk, Samuel and Hosea to name just a few, all interceded for nations, calling for, among other things, forgiveness, judgement, mercy and an end to drought.

In the New Testament, Paul asks repeatedly for prayers from places like Corinth, Ephesus and Rome. Paul also teaches that we should 'Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.' (Galatians 6:2)

The Gospels make clear that Jesus wants all people everywhere to experience the love of God. Philip Yancey, in his book *Prayer*, makes note that not once does Jesus turn down a request for physical healing. In the Gospels, it makes clear that Jesus desires us to have life and life to the full (John 10:10). This includes every aspect of our being: spiritual, emotional, mental and physical.

But in this broken world, not everyone is able to live life to the full. Poverty, conflict, the climate crisis and the pandemic have robbed people of hope, health and opportunities. We know God's plan is to restore this world and so, as Paul urges us to, let us pray for people who are struggling, that they may have life in abundance.

God is already at work. But we have the privilege of being able to join with him through prayer to help our global neighbours.

Where to begin

It can be difficult to know where to start, with so many challenging situations across the world. So here are our tips on how to get started:

- Ask God to place on your heart a country to pray for. Spend some time listening and reflecting on what he shares with you.
- Begin by acknowledging God's power. Then pray general prayers. Pray for God's kingdom to come. Pray for individuals and communities. Pray for those in power. And pray for the local church to continue to bring hope.
- Find out more information about what's going on there. You can use our website to help you out. The more you know the more specific your prayers will grow to be.
- Keep inviting the Holy Spirit to speak into the situations you're praying for. Listen to what God is saying.
- Make time each week to pray about this country. You could set a reminder on your phone or put a Post-it note in your Bible to remind you.
- Keep a notebook to write down your petitions and answered prayers.
- Invite a friend to join you via WhatsApp, text or email. Exchange prayer alerts about the country and pray together. Or commit to praying as a family, household or church small group. Stick a map of the country to your fridge and attach Post-it notes.

A marathon not a sprint

Intercession changes us. When we bring others before God our attitudes begin to shift as our hearts become more aligned with God's plan for the world. We get to see how God sees the world – how much he loves individual people and creation – and our relationship with God and others becomes deeper as a result.

You may not see answers to prayer immediately, or see the effect your prayers are having on people's lives, but you can be assured that all things work according to God's glory. Your prayers will be making a difference and will change lives.

There will be times when situations seem impossible, but we are praying to a God who can do even more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). We are praying to a God who healed the blind, parted the seas, and who created the entire Earth. So feel free to pray your biggest and boldest prayers.

And when we are tired, or unsure of what to say – when the situation feels too big – remember that 'the spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans' (Romans 8:26). Our prayers can take the form of silence, sobs or even shaking our fists and stamping our feet at the injustice in the world. God listens. God understands. God cares.

Where to next?

If you're looking for ways to practise intercessory prayer and to regularly pray for some of the world's poorest people then we can help you.

Keep reading One Voice as it lands in your inbox each Friday. Every week we'll continue to share short prayer points from three counties to help you pray. We also include stories from around the world, which include prayer requests from the people we serve and from our global staff and partners. You can also use the information in these stories to help further guide your prayers.

If you would like to invite others to receive One Voice so they can join you in praying for the world, ask them to email our lovely team at info@tearfund.org who will be able to help sign them up.

All of the stories included in the email are published later on the Tearfund website under the stories pages, so do check them out.

Our global staff and partners really appreciate how so many of you faithfully stand with us each week in prayer, interceding for us and the people we serve. It makes such a difference. Thank you for keeping us in your prayers, and know that in these difficult times, we continue to hold you in our prayers too.

Living Ebola-free in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is currently Ebola-free. But the nation – particularly the east of the country – has faced a huge battle against the disease, with devastating loss of life as well as the negative impact on schools and businesses. Tearfund and our partners were at the frontline of this fight, amid the challenges of conflict and the coronavirus pandemic.

In North Kivu and the Ituri provinces, a deadly outbreak began in August 2018. It was declared over on 25 June 2020. But by that point there had been 2,287 deaths (2,134 confirmed cases and 153 probable).

A separate, smaller outbreak in the western province of Équateur saw 55 deaths, but thankfully was declared over on 18 November 2020.

Good practices

To prevent the spread of Ebola, a project funded by the United States Agency for International Development and implemented by Tearfund in partnership with IMA World Health (IMA), began in the North Kivu and the Ituri provinces. It helped communities access clean drinking water by digging wells and installing pumps and taps. These pumping systems are solar powered, meaning they're more efficient and sustainable.

In schools and places of worship (churches and mosques), Tearfund installed water-harvesting tools to collect rainwater, set up handwashing stations and promoted good hygiene practices.

To prevent Ebola from spreading, washing hands regularly with clean water is key. It also reduces other waterborne diseases such as cholera.

The project has meant at least 15,000 people now have access to drinking water, as well as being trained in how to prevent the spread of Ebola.

'Praise God for how he has helped us to prevent many more people from contracting Ebola, through this project,' shares Hebdavi Muhindo, who leads Tearfund's work in the DRC. 'But please continue to pray for the DRC, which still faces violence, coronavirus and the threat of Ebola returning.'

Please pray

- Lift up in prayer people who have lost loved ones during the devastating Ebola outbreaks in the DRC. May they be comforted in their time of grieving.
- Thank God for the Tearfund/IMA partnership and how it's successfully helped so many people be free from Ebola.
- Pray for the Tearfund team and our partners in the DRC, who are working in a very challenging context. May they be protected and encouraged, and know God's hand over them.

Pray for the world

-  According to the UN there are now 300,000 Nigerian refugees who have fled violence and have sought shelter across the borders in Diffa, Niger. Lift these people up to God and pray for their safety and wellbeing. Conflict continues to escalate in this region. Pray for lasting peace in Niger and Nigeria so that people can begin to rebuild their lives free from violence.

-  The coronavirus pandemic is having catastrophic consequences in Afghanistan on people's health, incomes and debt levels. These people are already vulnerable, as prolonged conflict and recurring natural disasters have taken a toll. Pray for help to reach those who are struggling, particularly with the onset of a harsh winter. Pray for the hospitals, which are overstretched. And please keep praying for an end to coronavirus.

-  Deadly clashes between farmers and nomadic herders have flared up again in Chad. Last week, at least 11 people were killed. Pray for the conflict between these two groups to be resolved and for calm to be restored. Lift up those who have lost loved ones and pray for God's comfort and peace. Pray for protection for communities who have been caught in the middle of this violence.