

ONE VOICE

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

CHOOSING TO FORGIVE

This story contains details of violence that some readers may find upsetting.

It was late evening when Joel saw lights in the neighbouring village. It was on fire. His community in Plateau State, Nigeria, had previously been threatened by armed herdsmen in a dispute over land. They believed the attackers were heading their way.

Joel*, aged 21, was the eldest child – with two younger brothers still at home. Along with their mother, they decided to flee for their lives when they heard gunshots. But they had to leave behind their father, who only had one leg.

The herdsmen attacked, and in the ensuing chaos the rest of the family ran in different directions. Joel was shot at but survived – as did his two younger brothers.

Joel's parents were both killed. His mother was shot while sheltering in a neighbour's house. His father was also shot, and the family home burnt down. Nine people in the village were killed that night – in total an estimated 86 people were killed across the neighbouring communities.

Alone together

The brothers fled to a makeshift camp in the nearby city of Jos to join with 6,000 displaced people. With no sanitation, disease spread in the camp and Joel's youngest brother caught typhoid.

But thanks to water and sanitation workshops from Tearfund's partner, RURCON, the spread of typhoid and cholera was halted, and people – including Joel and his brothers – learnt to keep safe and healthy. After treatment, Joel's brother recovered.

RURCON supported Joel's family with soap, water purification tablets, a mattress and financial help – a vital lifeline to the family who fled with nothing.

'Our parents, they were our pillar,' says Joel who is now taking care of his brothers. 'But now they have gone. We have nobody to look up to. They were so important to us, as teachers, as moral guides. They cared for us. Now they are no more.'

'But I am a Christian. I pray that God will restore my mind so I can forget what happened. I want to move on with my life. I want to forgive. And to forget. But it is very painful.'

PLEASE PRAY

- Pray for Joel and his two younger brothers, that they will find peace as they work through the trauma that they faced and seek to forgive their attackers.

- Lift up the staff from Tearfund's partner, RURCON, in Plateau State, Nigeria. Pray for safety as they seek to follow Jesus where the need is greatest in often dangerous circumstances.
- Pray for the country of Nigeria, where violence and conflict between different groups often pushes already struggling families deeper into poverty.

**Name has been changed to protect identity.*

A NOTE FROM...

'I found it almost unbearable listening to Joel tell his story. I lost my father a few years ago – in nothing like the horrific circumstances he describes – but Joel's description of his parents as "our pillar" really touched me. And also his determination to somehow find the strength to forgive their killers.'

Peter Shaw, *Tear Times* editor

BRAVE TALK

When women realise the power they have to change things, they are drivers in making that change happen.

Women like Azrah* from rural Pakistan. Azrah is 26 and lives with her four children. Looking after them and doing jobs around the house used to take up all of her time and energy. In the monsoon months, there was the added work of collecting cotton from the fields and grass for their cattle. There was little time to socialise and the work was challenging for her.

But then, one of Tearfund's local partners in Pakistan invited Azrah to join a Women's Empowerment Group (WEG), and from that, everything began to change.

A whole new world

Tearfund's local partners are setting up WEG's across Pakistan. These groups bring women together to learn, socialise and grow in confidence. They are instrumental in helping people to overcome poverty as they give women the tools needed to transform their own lives and the lives of those around them.

According to the World Bank, 80 per cent of people living in poverty in Pakistan are in rural areas. They are highly vulnerable to waterborne diseases, which claim the lives of 250,000 children each year.

At her WEG, Azrah was taught about vital hygiene and sanitation practises to protect her family against preventable diseases. She also learnt about disaster risk management – as Pakistan is a high-risk country for natural disasters. This means she can keep herself and her family safe in emergencies, for example during cyclones and earthquakes. Azrah also learnt how to prevent child marriage and received teaching on her rights as a woman.

She has discovered a purpose for herself, and now helps other women achieve their potential too.

From me to you

'By attending trainings, I have started to believe in my own capabilities,' Azrah says.

Our local partners have now appointed Azrah as an Area Officer. She supports women in around 16 villages who are part of WEG or other self-help groups. In one village, she worked with women to teach them advocacy skills. This led to the women applying for a grant from the local government, so that they could improve life in their community.

'I aim to transform the lives of women in the villages I visit, so that they can live their life with liberty, and in the pursuit of happiness,' Azrah concludes.

PLEASE PRAY

- Praise God for women like Azrah who want to use the skills they've been taught to empower other women to lift their families out of poverty.
- Pray that WEGs will continue to provide a safe space for marginalised women to meet together and learn vital skills. Pray that God will raise up strong women out of these groups.
- Pray against barriers that stop women from achieving their full potential. Pray for an end to child marriage.

**Name has been changed to protect identity.*

HUNGER CRISIS LOOMING IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The devastating consequences of the climate crisis are hitting southern Africa hard – and it's set to get worse in the next few months.

Some parts of the region have had their lowest rainfall since 1981, while others have endured cyclones, crop-eating pests and diseases.

Today, more than 9.2 million people don't have enough food. This figure is expected to grow to 12 million, at the peak of the lean season (October 2019 to March 2020).

Pregnant women, new mothers and children, as well as the elderly and those with disabilities are most vulnerable.

Not enough to survive

The number of acutely malnourished children in parts of Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Angola is growing.

In Mozambique, two cyclones, drought and violence in the north are expected to leave nearly 2 million people without enough food to survive.

Across the region, the risk of gender-based violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, particularly against women and children, has risen. This has been exacerbated by the disasters and the lack of food.

Immediate needs

'The situation on the ground is dire and could become catastrophic,' says Elizabeth Myendo who leads Tearfund's Disaster Management Team for Southern and East Africa.

'Our local church partners on the ground in Angola, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique are saying the immediate needs are food and water for the people. In some rural areas, more than 60 per cent of the population are living on a single meal a day.'

PLEASE PRAY

Father God,

May your presence and provision be in abundance for people in southern Africa who face an acute lack of food. Please guide Tearfund staff and partners, as well as other humanitarian groups, in how to best respond to this crisis. And please give wisdom to leaders and politicians in the region.

In Jesus' name, amen.

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

 Last week in Ethiopia at least 67 people were killed and more than 200 injured in violent protests. Ethnic tensions and violence are increasing. Please pray for peace and security for the country.

 As economic conditions worsen in Haiti, opposition political parties have started several violent protests to force the president to resign. Schools have been closed for over two months and public services are struggling to function. Pray for an agreement between the different parties, and for peace and reconciliation.

 A UK General Election has been called for December 12. Please join with us in praying for wisdom, integrity and unity. We pray that despite the complex political uncertainties we face as a Union, that justice and compassion for those here and abroad living in poverty would not be lost.