

ONE VOICE

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

The harvest that rebuilt a church

Our harvest services are going to look very different this year. Yet in times of difficulty, expressing gratitude for God's provision becomes even more important. For one community in Sulawesi, Indonesia, gratitude at harvest time has helped rebuild the church...

In September 2018, an earthquake in Sulawesi caused huge destruction and loss of life. Nearly 70,000 houses were damaged or destroyed, and many crops were lost.

Part of Tearfund's long-term response has been training communities in improved farming techniques, and providing seeds and tools so they can grow their own vegetables. This not only helps families get all the nutrients they need, but also provides a source of income.

But the success of this project has had unintended consequences...

An abundant offering

When our partner staff recently visited communities in the Kulawi region, they found that part of the harvest had been donated to the local church. The church had been heavily damaged in the 2018 earthquake.

Yarni, who leads one of the farming groups, explains: 'We offer [the harvest] to the church as a form of our thanksgiving to the Lord Jesus, who has blessed us through farming.'

These are people whose lives would have been turned upside down by the earthquake. People who have experienced bitter poverty. Yet as soon as circumstances began to change, their first thought was to bless the community as a whole.

Firstfruits (and veg)

The farmers were following the Biblical principle of offering the 'firstfruits' of the harvest to God. There are many passages in scripture that describe this practice, including Proverbs 3:9-10: 'Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops.'

Harvest is a time of thanksgiving. A time to remember that, whatever our circumstances may be, we have reasons to give thanks to God. It is also a time to remember that we are blessed in order to be a blessing – as demonstrated so powerfully by these communities in Sulawesi.

Please pray

Take a moment to consider what the 'firstfruits' of your own life may be – the things that God has provided for you. Maybe write them down on a piece of paper. Consider how you might use these things to bless the people around you.

Tearfund has launched our 2020 Harvest Appeal. **Go to www.tearfund.org/onevoiceharvest to find out how you can help.**

A note from...

'Harvest Thanksgiving was always one of my favourite services growing up in church. I have nostalgic memories of everyone carrying their food offerings up the aisle. Sadly, such processions might be few and far between this year. But that doesn't mean we can't show the spirit of thanksgiving and generosity demonstrated so beautifully by the people of Sulawesi.'

Gideon Heugh, Brand and Communications Team

Finding new ways to support older people in Rwanda

The Bible tells us that 'grey hair is a crown of splendour' (Proverbs 16:31). However, in some societies, older people can seem 'invisible', and both their strengths and their needs can be easily overlooked. Tearfund has been working to find new ways to support older people in Rwanda, especially during the coronavirus pandemic.

Charles* is a survivor of the genocide against the Tutsi people in Rwanda. He is now 83, and lives with his wife Rebecca* who is 70 years old. Charles suffers with ill-health and poor eyesight and is unable to work. The couple, like many older people in Rwanda, rely on their children for everyday provisions and food.

However, during the coronavirus lockdown, Charles's children were unable to visit or deliver food. Fortunately, a local church group, supported by a Tearfund partner, reached out and offered to provide regular food packages to Charles and his family.

This was a welcome surprise for Charles, especially since he was not connected to the church.

'This might seem little, but it is a very big help,' Charles says. 'What is more important is the heart with which they provided food, even though I'm not a member of their congregation. Who am I for them to think about me?'

'Older people need us,' says Mr Fulgence, the Church and Community Facilitator at the church that helped Charles and his family.

Researching the needs of older people

Even before the pandemic, Tearfund was aware that urgent action needed to be taken to support older people in Rwanda.

In 2019, due to increasing concerns that older people were being overlooked, Tearfund commissioned research into poverty among older people in Rwanda.

The findings suggest that most older Rwandans, despite being incredibly resilient, often struggle to meet basic needs – for example, having access to water, regular food, and electricity. There is a distinct lack of social and health services geared towards them, and many are lonely.

'Older people are exposed to more than economic poverty – they are often socially excluded, lonely and made to feel socially irrelevant. Development programmes and projects do not usually include older people and the focus is almost always on those who are physically able,' explains Emmanuel Murangira, who oversees Tearfund's work in Rwanda.

It was widely assumed that older members of society are looked after by family members or the local community. This has traditionally been the case, but there are increasing gaps in this type of care, due to the 1995 Genocide against the Tutsis and people moving away from their families for work. However, no alternative support system has been put in place. Since the number of people over 65 in Rwanda is set to increase by three to five times in the next twenty years, this problem cannot be ignored.

New risks, new opportunities

Soon after this research was published, the coronavirus pandemic hit. Older people immediately became even more vulnerable since they are most at risk of complications from the virus.

Tearfund and our local partners took this opportunity to step up support for older people across Rwanda. Our coronavirus response included providing food packages and face masks, sharing public health messages on local radio, promoting hygiene practices, and offering psychological and social support.

Rather than assuming older people are being looked after by family members, Tearfund urged local partners and churches to reach out beyond their usual communities. This meant that older people like Charles were able to receive the help they desperately needed.

Prioritising older people

As Rwanda continues to fight the pandemic, Tearfund and our local partners continue to work hard on the front lines to support the most vulnerable. During the pandemic, and beyond, we are committed to supporting Rwanda's ageing population and ensuring they get the care they need.

Since churches are present in every community in Rwanda, and faith leaders are generally trusted, Tearfund's model of working through the local church has the potential to be extremely effective in reaching and supporting Rwanda's ageing population in the years to come.

'Our ageing and inclusion project will ensure we keep older people in focus in all our programming,' says Emmanuel Murangira. 'It will help us to continuously learn, develop strategies and approaches for the care, support and inclusion of older people in our work and the life of the communities that God has called us to serve. Only this way can we truly honour and celebrate them, for without them we wouldn't be who we are or be where we are today!'

Please pray

- Thank God that Tearfund and our local partners have been able to help older people like Charles during the pandemic. Pray that Tearfund's recent research on the needs of the ageing population in Rwanda will encourage governments, churches and other development agencies to provide more support to older people.
- Pray for older people around the world as they face various challenges, including coronavirus. Pray for those who are socially isolated to form new connections and receive the support and care that they need.

- The coronavirus pandemic has reached a sobering milestone, with 1 million deaths now reported across the world. Please join us in praying for all those who are sick, grieving the loss of loved ones, or have been pushed further into poverty as a result of the pandemic. And let's keep praying for an end to coronavirus.

**Name changed to protect identity*

Yemenis return to 'normal' despite coronavirus concerns

The official coronavirus statistics in Yemen suggest the outbreak hasn't been as severe as in places like the USA, Brazil and India. But the figures have barely changed in several weeks, suggesting a worrying lack of testing and reporting of cases.

Perhaps even more of a concern is how many Yemenis have returned to a state of pre-coronavirus normality. After a period of lockdown, businesses, schools, markets and mosques have opened once again.

Despite the nation's government insisting that 'opening up' was to be done in line with necessary preventative methods such as social distancing and handwashing, this has not been monitored or enforced.

At the time of writing, according to the Yemeni government, there have been 2,030 confirmed cases and 587 deaths from coronavirus in Yemen. But it's feared the actual numbers may be far greater. According to research by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, infections may have already reached one million.

Cultural norms

Karen Soerensen leads Tearfund's work in Yemen. She's concerned about the way the virus is being viewed by many:

'We're hearing reports from our partner in Yemen that life is 'back to normal', she says. 'There appears to be a general public belief that the virus has either come and gone, just like any seasonal flu, or was just a rumour altogether.

'Many people are not wearing masks, hugging and kissing – as is their culture – and there is now also a stigma associated with those wearing masks in public. The assumption is that if someone wears one, they themselves are ill.

'It means our partner's coronavirus response projects might not always be received enthusiastically by the public. Even so, our partner is delivering hygiene kits and information, alongside food baskets, which is proving the best way to go about it.'

Not going hungry

Tearfund's partner staff are all equipped with personal protective equipment (including facemasks), and are being very careful in how they work. Praise God, none have had any coronavirus symptoms.

Akil* lives in the Abyan area of southern Yemen. As a shepherd he doesn't earn enough to care for his family of nine.

Our partner saw his need and began to provide monthly food baskets for him and his family. 'We suffered a lot before you provided us with the food baskets,' Akil told our partner staff team.

'After we received them I could buy medicine for my disabled granddaughter and also a water tank. Most importantly, my children do not go to sleep hungry anymore. It is all because of you. May God bless you! We hope you continue providing us with the food baskets, they help us a lot.'

Please pray

Father God,

You know the many challenges being faced by the people of Yemen. Please give strength and wisdom to those who are working to prevent the spread of coronavirus in the country. Please also bring an end to the terrible conflict there, which is pushing more people into extreme poverty.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Amen.

**Name changed to protect identity*

Pray for the world

 Despite a peace agreement signed in 2019, many regions of the Central African Republic (CAR) remain in the hands of rebel groups, prolonging the ongoing civil war. Pray for reconciliation between these groups, and for lasting peace, as the country is expected to hold presidential elections in December.

 The rise in the global temperature is putting millions of lives at risk, especially in poorer communities. As part of The Climate Coalition, we are calling on the UK government to lead the world in delivering a greener, fairer recovery, which limits global warming to 1.5°C. Pray that the government will take action and that other countries will follow suit.

 Heavy rains continue to cause devastation across the Sahel region in Africa, leaving people homeless and without a source of income. Niger's capital city has been largely submerged in water, and this crisis comes amid a rise in violence across the country. Pray for people's protection, and provision for their immediate needs. Pray for less rainfall; and that it won't cause further damage.