

ONE VOICE

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

Overcoming depression in a conflict zone

One morning, Salha's husband, Darwish, went to work. It was supposed to be a day like any other, but instead a rocket exploded just metres away from him. Darwish died from his injuries three months later. Salha's world was turned upside down.

Yemen, where the family lives, is in the midst of a brutal conflict. And it's ordinary families, like Salha's*, who are paying the price.

Darwish* was the breadwinner of the family. When he passed away, as well as losing her husband and friend, Salha lost all of her financial stability.

Joy to ashes

Salha soon became depressed. She lost her appetite and stopped doing all of her regular activities. Even caring for her children was too much.

Grief manifested into anger and she became violent towards her sons. They would leave the house as often as they could and beg for food.

Salha slowly became even more isolated; friends and family gave up on her, calling her crazy. But Salha wasn't crazy. The violence, sadness and isolation were all manifestations of her depression and response to trauma.

A mother returns

Tearfund's local partner encouraged Salha to participate in one of the support groups they run in the community. Through these groups, people share and process their emotions and begin to heal from their pain. With the six-year conflict showing no sign of stopping, these groups are a lifeline to many.

In the group sessions, once Salha began to talk about what had happened to her, things started to change. After three sessions she began to smile for the first time in a long time. It was here she found strength to begin again: 'I will now take care of myself and my children,' she declared.

And it's her sons who have the joy of having their mother back. 'She treats us in a tender way and plays with us,' shares one of her sons. 'We never want to be away from our mother now.'

Please pray

God of wholeness, God of grace, draw near to all who are hurting from conflict. Bring them your peace and comfort, your hope and your joy. We lift up to you the Yemeni people who have gone through so much. Lord, bring an end to this conflict; bring peace to this nation. Amen.

*Names changed to protect identities

A note from...

'The year 2020 has been a very hard one for Tearfund's local partner in Yemen. But despite the many difficulties such as the ongoing conflict, frequent flash flooding and the spread of coronavirus, they haven't stopped. Please pray for our partner's staff as they continue to serve thousands of Yemeni people in great need.'

Peter Vickers, Eurasia and North Africa Team

The Reverend with a radical plan

The Naga hills in Myanmar are home to several remote villages. It's a serious challenge to reach them – visitors must take a short flight, a boat trip, and then walk for several hours. But it is a journey that Rev Samuel is prepared to take quite often.

Rev Samuel works with one of Tearfund's local partners in Myanmar, and over the years he has developed a positive relationship with the villagers in the Naga hills region. They trust him, and know that they can turn to him in times of need.

Slashing and burning

The villagers are mostly self-sufficient, growing their own rice and fishing in local streams. However, they were not aware that their farming methods were causing long-term damage to the environment.

When they fished, the villagers used to use a chemical to daze the fish. These chemicals were polluting the water and harming wildlife.

Every year, the farmers used a 'slash and burn' method; cutting down trees and then burning the ground to clear the way for planting rice. The hills were becoming increasingly bare and barren, and the forests were getting smaller.

A new way of thinking

Rev Samuel knew that the forests and wildlife could be saved if the villagers were willing to adopt different farming techniques. He explained to the community how their farming methods were causing damage to the environment, and offered training and resources to support them in shifting to sustainable ways of farming.

Rev Samuel also shared some biblical reflections about creation and our God-given responsibility as humans to take care of it. This radically changed the villagers' thinking. He describes how the community listened with awe as they started to understand their role in caring for the natural world around them. They said, 'We never thought that the environment is included in creation... only after the Bible reflection, we came to realise it.'

Empowered to care for creation

The community became eager to make changes to protect the environment. They stopped the slash and burn method of farming, and are now developing a rice paddy field near the village. Not only will this avoid further damage to the forests, but the rice paddy is easier for them to access and can be used every year, saving time and work.

The villagers have also adapted their fishing practices to be chemical-free. They felt so strongly about protecting the streams that they have decided to ban the use of chemicals when fishing. The community now view the environment as something entrusted to them that they should care for. Learning more about different ways of farming has opened up more possibilities – they now know they can use the land close to where they live, without destroying the forest.

The villagers said: 'We never knew that God has given us resources in places where we live. We now know that we have our own resources and we will use them in the future.'

Please pray

- Thank God for the villagers in Naga hills, their willingness to adapt their farming methods and their new passion for caring for creation.
- Pray that more farmers around the world will be supported to adopt sustainable farming methods where necessary. Pray that these new techniques will benefit the farmers and local community, as well as the environment.
- Pray for systems to be put in place to protect forests and other natural habitats from being destroyed.

More than 1 million people affected by flooding in South Sudan

Severe flooding in South Sudan has left more than a million people in need of urgent help. It's the latest humanitarian crisis to hit the world's youngest country.

Heavy rains have been falling for the past five months. Rivers are overflowing, roads are unusable, and airstrips are flooding. It's becoming more difficult to reach people with essential supplies such as food, clean water, cooking utensils and materials to build shelters.

Half a million people have been forced to leave their homes because their crops are waterlogged and their animals have drowned.

Numerous challenges

South Sudan is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change, with flooding one of the main risks.

In the Twic East area, where Tearfund has a field base, the current flooding is the worst in living memory. The whole area is now under water and the only means of travel is either on foot or by canoe. Many houses have been submerged. Our staff have also been forced to relocate.

For the approximately 100,000 people who have lost their homes in the Twic East area since July, the temporary camps are crowded and uncomfortable. Access to drinking water is difficult. Good hygiene practices are challenging without toilets and clean tap water, which increases the risks of waterborne diseases, malaria, and coronavirus.

Eating once a day

'Because of the flooding, it has become harder to feed my family,' says Amer Kuol Ajang, who is now living in a temporary camp in Twic East.

'It's equally difficult maintaining hygiene, keeping social distancing and using proper toilets, due to the fact that many people are gathered in this small place. Since moving to this camp, we have been eating once a day,' says Amer.

Tearfund and our partners are responding. We're building toilets, promoting good hygiene messages, and installing surface water collection systems. With the heavy rains there are more fish available in the rivers, so we are training people and giving them the kit to catch fish.

Urgent needs

'The water level in Twic East is as high as the hip at some points and movement is only possible by canoe,' says Joseph Aloo, Tearfund's Area Coordinator for Twic East and Pochalla.

'The main dyke that protects the town keeps breaking every day and the community struggles to patch it with mud stuffed in bags.'

'I was evacuated with other humanitarian workers by a helicopter that rescued us mid-air without landing as there was no place to land. The experience has been very traumatising.'

'People are going to starve if humanitarian assistance isn't provided urgently. The community has lost their livestock which is a key source of income, and are also facing the risk of waterborne diseases.'

South Sudan is already facing a collapsing economy, widespread malnutrition, violence and conflict, and the challenges of coronavirus. Please join us in prayer.

Please pray

- Pray for families, forced to leave their homes because of the floods, who are now struggling to survive in temporary camps. Pray they can access food and clean water.
- Lift up Tearfund's team in South Sudan who have been evacuated. Pray that they will be able to return soon to help those most in need.
- Pray for all the challenges the country is facing today, on top of the devastating flooding.

Pray for the world

 The UN has reported that extreme poverty has risen for the first time in 22 years. It has projected that 235 million people will need assistance in 2021 – up 40 per cent from this year. Pray for God's protection and provision for people in poverty. Lift up the work Tearfund and our local partners are doing to help end extreme poverty; pray we will reach those in need.

 Thank God for everyone who organised or took part in a Tearfund *Big Quiz Night* over the last few weeks. So far, an incredible 17,689 people and 487 churches took part, raising a magnificent £230,350. The money raised will empower some of the world's poorest people to escape poverty for good. Praise God for the lives that will be changed because of this.

 There has been a surge in violence in Uganda over the last few weeks leading to several deaths ahead of the presidential elections in January. This is the first election since 2006 that the EU will not send a group of observers to monitor the election. Pray for a decrease in violence. Pray for a fair and inclusive election, and for the results to be respected.