

# ONE VOICE

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

### PLANTING HOPE IN BANGLADESH

**Umoja is a Tearfund initiative that brings church leaders and communities together to equip local people to determine their own future. It is how one group in Bangladesh are changing their community for good.**

#### **Faith into action**

The group of 15 meet weekly, studying the Bible and praying. They also work together to help their local community, with support from Tearfund. They have set up coaching for school children, a Sunday school and are visiting families in the area to build friendships.

But it doesn't stop there. They have also been learning about God's creation and the importance of caring for it.

Bangladesh is low-lying and vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including more frequent flooding. This leads to widespread damage to homes and crops, and the high risk of deadly waterborne diseases. It puts people in danger and can push communities further into poverty.

Reflecting on this, the group decided to take action.

#### **Seeds of change**

Understanding the importance of planting trees, they pooled their resources together to buy saplings and distribute them to families. Some group members worked extra days in the fields to make this possible.

Fifty families received three saplings each. 'We are very happy to have distributed the saplings successfully... We hope this initiative will inspire others to plant more trees,' says group facilitator, Sojoni Murmu. Trees limit the amount of stormwater runoff, which may reduce the effects of flooding.

Robin Muru, the village leader, is full of praise for the group: 'We are very happy for this Bible study group. We would like to continue to assist their goods works, and wish for their success.'

#### **PLEASE PRAY**

Thank you, God, that churches around the world are being inspired through your word to care for each other and for creation. We pray that you will continue to bless groups like this one in Bangladesh, that are making a positive difference in their community and transforming the lives of people in need. And continue to speak to us Lord about how we can make a difference. Amen.

## A NOTE FROM...

'We can either be overwhelmed by the effects of climate change, or we can do something about it. I'm challenged by the practical ways that people in this community are refusing to let the devastating effects of climate change rule their lives. Please keep praying for them and taking action in your own life to care for God's creation.'

**Emily Wilson, Asia Team**

## **HOW A FAMILY ESCAPED DEVASTATING FLOODING IN SOUTH SUDAN**

**Almost 1 million people are in urgent need of help as severe flooding continues to affect communities in South Sudan.**

It is the latest crisis in a country where half of the population don't have enough food to eat. People have been forced from their homes and fields of crops lost because of the flooding.

The rainy season usually starts in June and ends in October, but this year, climate changes have led to heavy rains and extreme flooding in many East African countries.

In South Sudan, it is estimated that almost half a million people have been displaced by the floods. Many roads are unusable, making it much harder to get urgent aid to communities.

The country's government has declared a state of emergency in the affected areas.

### **Desperate efforts**

Aguil lives with her two children in Twic East, in eastern South Sudan, not far from the River Nile. Her husband spends most of his time away from home. The 23-year-old told our Tearfund team:

'There was so much rain, it felt like it had been raining forever, the swamps overflowed. The water filled my house, there was nowhere to go so we stood on our beds. One of the houses on the compound was destroyed, as well as the toilet that was recently built.'

'I tried to protect my house as much as I could by building small mud walls around it, but I couldn't do much. Everything was covered by water.'

### **New threats**

Around 90 per cent of crops in Twic East have been destroyed and approximately ten per cent of livestock have been killed by the flooding.

'Life has always been difficult, but the flooding made it worse. I lost my five goats. The fields are destroyed... we don't know what to do,' said Aguil.

Although the water is slowly receding, in most places there is still stagnant water left by floods. This makes it a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Aguil and the people in her community are at risk of malaria and other waterborne diseases like cholera if emergency assistance doesn't come in time.

There is an urgent need for:

- Clean drinking water
- Food supplies for feeding centres affected by flooding
- Mosquito nets and increased malaria screening for children under five
- Guidance for communities on how to have good hygiene and sanitation practices in flood-affected areas
- Disinfecting and restoring boreholes

Aguil, who is a committed Christian and a choir member at her church, is putting her trust in God: 'I pray that God will make things better for us. I pray that we find a solution to this flooding, I pray that God grants us life. I want a better future for my children, where they can go to school and live a good life. And I pray for peace for my country.'

### **PLEASE PRAY**

- Ask God to comfort and protect communities and staff across South Sudan who are affected by flooding.
- Pray particularly for people like Aguil, who have lost their homes and livelihoods – that they will be comforted and have their hope restored.
- As some Tearfund projects have been suspended in parts of the country because of the flooding, pray that they can quickly be restarted.

### **PRAYING FOR AN END TO THE DROUGHT IN ZIMBABWE**

**It's mid-morning, and nobody is on the streets of Irisville. The Zimbabwean village looks like it has been deserted.**

In fact the locals are trying their best to find shade from the scorching sun amid temperatures of 40°C.

Irisville is typical of many parts of southern Africa today: trees and shrubs stand bare, and on those that have survived, the leaves are burnt.

'This is how it has been for the last three years,' says Douglas Maselea, a 56-year-old farmer and father of eight who has lived in Irisville since 1985.

'The sun has dried up our water sources and anything you plant in the farm is scorched before it matures.'

The UN estimates that more than 11 million people don't have enough food to survive in countries like Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The global climate crisis is at its most acute here, compounded by two cyclones that destroyed crops earlier this year.

#### **Nothing grows**

Douglas used to have a flourishing farm, but today nothing is growing because of the drought. 'I used to harvest maize and groundnuts but have not been able to grow anything since 2017 because there is no rain.'

'I am now trying to keep two cows that produce milk, which I'm trying to sell in the market.'

'This drought situation is very bad, I can't even explain. We have nothing. We have no money to buy anything and we have no maize'.

Douglas explains that the drought has led to an exodus of young people crossing the border into South Africa. 'Very few come back or support their families because, even there, they are not able to make a lot of money,' he says. 'Usually they come back after two or three years with some groceries and then go back.'

### **Pooling resources**

Despite the severe challenges in Irisville, Douglas is grateful for Tearfund's local partner, the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ). Through an approach called Church and Community Transformation (CCT), championed by Tearfund around the world, the EFZ team have helped to bring people together and share their resources to get through these challenging times.

'We bring together clothes that we don't wear anymore and distribute to those who do not have any. Also, whenever we get any relief food, we share with those in [most] need first,' Douglas explains.

And Douglas is still hopeful for the future of his family and community:

'I believe God can do something. In Exodus 17 we read the children of Israel were dying of thirst, but Moses hit the rock and water came out just like that.'

### **PLEASE PRAY:**

- As drought continues to affect southern Africa, pray for people like Douglas who are trying to survive with very little food and income.
- Pray for rain to fall again soon so that crops can grow and people have food to eat.
- Thank God for the work of Tearfund's partner EFZ and the Church and Community Transformation (CCT) approach.

### **PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

 Thank God for everyone who organised or took part in a Tearfund Big Quiz Night last month. So far, an incredible £135,000 has been raised to empower some of the world's poorest people to escape poverty for good.

 As we draw closer to the General Election, please join us in praying for wisdom in how we should use our important vote. We pray that the Government elected on 13 December will lead with integrity, help to repair division and tackle inequality and poverty within the UK and the around the world.

 Locusts have destroyed up to 40 per cent of crops across Pakistan in the country's worst infestation this century. Farming communities have been left without food and a source of income. Pray that they are able to recover from this significant loss.