

ONE VOICE

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

NO TIME TO WASTE

By Tearfund's Cheryl Bannatyne, following a trip to Pakistan.

Passing through a metal door from the dusty street we enter a small courtyard. The concrete floor is swept and washed down – pristine and spotless. Rubina keeps a beautiful home and warmly welcomes us.

She's very aware of how important it is to keep things clean. But however much she tries, Rubina and her family are stuck in a waste-strewn, unhygienic slum.

Disease and distress

All around the perimeter of this slum in Pakistan, piles of rubbish grow – breeding grounds for disease. At night, in an attempt to reduce the problem, fires are started but the filthy, toxic smoke drifts over the community.

As Rubina talks to us she is gently waving a fan over her eldest son, Javed, who lies on a bed in the courtyard. Having a child with a disability is challenging in any circumstance but the build up of rubbish and the acrid smoke makes it even more difficult.

'He has severe breathing problem[s],' says Rubina. 'He feels pain because of the smoke.'

In a month there might be four or five trips to the hospital. The costs of medical care are a huge burden, as is the fear Rubina has for the ongoing health of her children.

Waste away

But change is on the horizon and it couldn't come soon enough for Rubina and her three children.

A hopeful smile lights her face. 'A lady came and told us about a project to clean the streets to make them rubbish free. So that there may be no diseases and problems for children.'

Tearfund partner, Pak Mission Society, is setting up a recycling hub on the outskirts of the community. They have employed a number of people from the neighbourhood who collect rubbish door-to-door and take it to the hub to be processed.

Now, not only is Rubina's home kept clean, but the streets around it are starting to be freed of rubbish.

Rubina is excited about how the recycling initiative could transform her daily life. 'We hope that it will be better for us and our children – and there will be fewer diseases.'

PLEASE PRAY

Father God,

Thank you for your loving care for Rubina and her family and many others like her in the slums of Pakistan. Thank you that she has hope for a brighter, cleaner future for her children. Please bless and expand the work being done to establish recycling hubs so that many more might also have this hope.

Amen.

If you give to Tearfund already, thank you. If you don't, and you feel led, please give regularly to help us reach more people like Rubina. Right now, this work in Pakistan is part of our Matched Giving Appeal, meaning your generosity could go even further.**

**Name changed to protect identity*

***Until 17 May, all donations will be doubled by the UK government, up to £2 million. The first three monthly payments of a new regular gift will be matched (payments must be set up between 18 February and 17 May and all three payments must be made by 17 July 2019).*

A NOTE FROM...

'I am excited to see the difference that this project is making for people like Rubina. The community will have a much cleaner and safer environment. Thank you for praying with us for this important work.' **Sumbal Amjad, Programme Assistant, Pak Mission Society**

NEW WAYS AHEAD FOR WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

Farida* is a 26-year-old from Afghanistan, and a mum of five children. She is one of roughly 20,000 Afghan women benefiting from self-help groups supported by Tearfund's local partner organisation.

'I had lots of problems before joining the self-help group,' says Farida*. 'My husband was jobless and we did not have money for our daily needs. When my children became sick, we did not have money to take them to the doctor. There were many times my children went to bed without eating, and I would cry.' She and her husband sold most of their possessions in order to try and make ends meet – carpets, kitchen equipment and more... but it wasn't enough.

A new opportunity

When a new self-help group is set up, our partner staff help the local community select members based on their level of need, with the most vulnerable families prioritised. When a group was planned in Farida's village, she was offered a place.

The women start by contributing small amounts of money to the group savings, but Farida had nothing to contribute. She borrowed some money from her mother to get started.

Farida quickly began to feel the benefit of the self-help group. 'I shared my problems with the group members, and they listened to me,' she says. After two months, Farida took two loans from the group, totalling 13,000 AFS [about £130], to help her husband start a small business.

With the money, Farida's husband bought a push cart and some household goods to sell, and soon began to earn a living. 'We are happy...' says Farida. 'The profit allows us to meet our daily needs. Our children are going to bed with full stomachs, and we paid my loans off in full!'

A chance to learn

Like so many women in Afghanistan, Farida wasn't sent to school because she is female. Self-help groups give women like her the opportunity to learn new skills, including how to read and write, and grow in confidence and self-worth. It's not just women who are benefiting, but children and young people too.

Shabana* is a 16-year-old benefiting from the creative enterprise of her local self-help group members, who are funding art lessons for young people who wouldn't otherwise get the opportunity. While art lessons could sound trivial, they have hugely enriched Shabana's life.

'I am thankful to the self-help group and my teacher for giving me the opportunity to explore life in a way that I could only have dreamed about,' says Shabana. 'Drawing is a whole new world for me, and has changed my opinion about life. I found art to be like a huge ocean, no matter how much I learnt, it was never enough. I can never reach the bottom. It is my dream to be a professional artist, who gives exhibitions in my country and throughout the world.'

A prayer for International Women's Day

Dear God,

We praise you that we are all fearfully and wonderfully made – different but equal. Together with women around the world who enjoy the opportunities they deserve to thrive, we thank you. And with those who lack those opportunities, or who are treated badly because of their gender, we cry out for more of your justice and transformation. Teach us to see one another and ourselves as you do – precious, significant and loved.

Amen.

**All names changed to protect identities.*

FAITH MATTERS

At the end of 2018 Tearfund sent an email to our supporters, and it drew a remarkable response. What does our Christian identity and ethos mean to our supporters? Reading through the 1,257 replies, a few clear themes stood out.

Trust

Our supporters said they feel they can trust Tearfund. Supporters commented that we were ultimately answerable to God in our use of financial gifts:

'I know I can trust Tearfund to use the money donated wisely, as they recognise they are God's stewards.' – Frances Wilson

'To me it's run not only to The Charity Commission standards but to God's standards of compassion and truth.' – Anon

Who we work with

It's not just Tearfund itself that our supporters said they trust. A number of people felt our close partnership with local churches – supporting them as they worked within their communities – was a big plus.

'Many people are concerned about wanting to know how much of their gift reaches the point of need. Delivery through local churches, at least to me, looks like one of the most trustworthy ways of ensuring that.' – John

'We love the way that you harness the incredible resource of local Christian churches. That network of willing volunteers, who are motivated by their love of Christ and who understand the local issues, represents an amazing opportunity for reaching needs quickly and effectively.'

– Ian Thompson

A spiritual response to poverty

A number of people said they appreciated that we were responding to other needs, as well as material poverty:

'Jesus showed deep, practical compassion for people's material needs but didn't stop there. He cared for their spiritual needs for forgiveness and love. Tearfund follows Jesus in this way, caring for the whole person.'

Anon

'The charity is an extension of the love we have been shown by Christ to others.' – Peter

Tearfund: a way to follow Jesus

Some people said that supporting Tearfund is helping them follow Jesus more closely.

'I don't see Tearfund as just a charity that I support, but as a group of people I'm in partnership with. They help me get a little closer to walking with Jesus the way I want to. They are engaged all over the world, in places where my heart can go but my feet can't.'

Anne Sixsmith

Here is one last response that struck a chord with us at Tearfund, courtesy of supporter Andrew Davies...

'I donate to Tearfund because it puts the Christian faith at the heart of its activities and isn't ashamed to do so. Too often, secular people view Christianity as an odd, diminishing part of our society. Tearfund challenges that view and demonstrates that modern Christianity is very real, essential and thriving.'

These are just a few of the many inspiring and insightful responses we received. Thank you to everyone who responded.

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



The people of Zimbabwe are still in need of long-term solutions to the economic and political problems that caused violent unrest in January. About 5.3 million people are now on the brink of severe food shortages. Pray for people affected, and that the church leaders there will have the wisdom to help bring about the lasting peace desperately needed in Zimbabwe.



Pray for the people of Chad in the run up to parliamentary elections planned for May. Pray especially for communities in the north and east of the country who are often affected by conflict. And lift up our partners there as they follow Jesus where the need is greatest, empowering people to overcome poverty and live fulfilled lives.



Today (8 March) is International Women's Day. In our work around the world we often see women and girls marginalised and discriminated against. Please pray for a global shift in attitudes, so that men and women can enjoy equal rights and opportunities.