

ONE VOICE

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

CYCLONE IDAI: ONE YEAR LATER

It's one year since Cyclone Idai tore through Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Hundreds of people were killed and nearly half a million were left homeless after strong winds and flooding.

In Mozambique alone, 600 people were killed. An estimated 1.85 million people were affected by the cyclone, and they are still facing food shortages. In the days and weeks after the cyclone hit, Tearfund's local partners distributed food, cooking utensils and shelter, along with seeds to replant crops destroyed by the winds.

Stranded

When the cyclone hit, Pastor Mateus's daughter became stranded by rising flood waters on her way to school. She had to climb a tree and was forced to wait for it to pass.

The ordeal was frightening for their family, but he shares that he knew 'God was taking care of my daughter.'

Pastor Mateus's farm – how he earned an income to feed his family – was affected by the cyclone. He lost his cows and his crops were destroyed.

The community received help from Tearfund's local partner CEDES, who distributed beans, rice, cooking oil, soap, buckets, chlorine for purifying water to make it safe to drink, and other essential items. 'I'm going to take these to my house to feed my family,' says Pastor Mateus. 'And with the strength that I'll get after eating this food, I'll go to work on my land. My prayer is for God to bless this land and bring rain.'

Strength to continue

One year after the cyclone, much of southern Africa is facing severe droughts, making it harder for people to rebuild their lives. We're still working to meet people's basic needs and help communities to be better prepared for future disasters. Please pray for our work in southern Africa.

PLEASE PRAY

Gracious Father,

We lift up the people of Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe who are still trying to rebuild their lives, a year after Cyclone Idai. Please continue to heal the sick, comfort the broken-hearted, and provide for those who are now facing devastating droughts across southern Africa. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

A NOTE FROM...

Climate change is continuing to be a huge challenge in southern and east Africa. Please keep people like Pastor Mateus in your prayers, as we're still working to meet people's basic needs and help communities to be better prepared for future disasters. **Edgar Jone, Tearfund Country Director in Mozambique.**

WHY WE CAN HAVE HOPE FOR SYRIA

It is nine years since the Syrian conflict began. For almost a decade, families have been forced to flee their homes, losing their loved ones and struggling to survive.

To find out what is happening behind the headlines, Rachael Adams spoke to Tim Purver, part of Tearfund's team based in Syria. Tim explains that, despite the desperate circumstances, he has hope for the future...

The scale of the crisis

Numbers alone paint a devastating picture of the conflict and how far-reaching the impact of the crisis has been:

- 11.7 million people need humanitarian assistance – five million of these are in desperate need, with many of them located in hard to reach areas, or areas that are still in the midst of conflict.
- Around half of the population have fled their homes. 5.9 million people are internally displaced, while 5.1 million people have fled Syria completely – forced to seek refuge in other countries. Syrian refugees now make up 10 per cent of the population in Jordan (half of them children).
- Around 83 per cent of Syrians live below the poverty line – the highest proportion of any country in the world

'You only have to travel a very small distance from the outskirts of [capital city] Damascus to see the scale of the devastation,' says Tim. 'As far as you can see there is just complete and utter destruction of properties – people's homes and businesses.'

Time to rebuild

In 2019, Tearfund received its official registration from the Syrian government. This was a significant step forward as it allows us to be able to be more involved in supporting programmes in the country that will help people lift themselves out of poverty.

Our teams in Syria and in the UK have been building crucial relationships with churches in Syria so that the programmes will reach even more people in need.

'There is huge potential for our partnerships with churches moving forward. There is a desire from them to be involved in supporting people during this conflict, and wanting to live out the call to love your neighbour,' Tim explains. 'The attacks have escalated very quickly, and we did not expect such a rapid deterioration of the situation,' says Gaston Slanwa, Tearfund's Country Director for Burkina Faso. 'As a result, we are working closely with our partner organisations to see how to help people in most need.'

'In recent months our partners have been adapting from longer term development work to the emergency response. Please pray that God will restore peace to Burkina Faso.'

Why water?

Living without access to clean water and safe sanitation makes even the simplest tasks more difficult and more deadly. Families often have to travel to collect water. Even then, the water is

often dirty and unsafe to drink. This can leave people suffering from diarrhoea and other illnesses that can be deadly for children.

'We are starting a programme in North East Syria to provide a safe water supply for people who have been internally displaced. Along with this will be hygiene support – this will cover lifesaving measures such as handwashing.

'Clean water is essential for people to live safely and with dignity,' says Tim.

Investing in people

The nine-year conflict has taken a devastating toll on the economy. Unemployment in Syria is 75 per cent – more than 60 per cent above the global average. So, as well as helping people to meet their basic needs, it's vital we invest in opportunities for people to earn their own income and provide for their families. This will give people long-term stability and a sustainable way out of poverty.

'In Syria, the conflict is ongoing, but our primary focus is on long-term recovery, ensuring that people are able to stand on their own two feet and provide their own income,' explains Tim.

'Tearfund believes that everyone has an amazing potential for change. So, we invest in people. We want to help people put their dreams into practise.

'This is especially important because Syria has a very young population. Because of the conflict, many young people feel hopeless. There is a real threat of a lost generation emerging in Syria.

'Tearfund will be coming alongside these young people, and giving them opportunities to dream again, so they can be at the forefront of rebuilding their country.'

Leaving the nightmares behind

Conflict doesn't just have an impact on physical health, but mental health too. The emotional impact of living in a country through nine years of conflict cannot be overestimated.

These feelings can't be resolved overnight. That's why we are investing in programmes to help people overcome trauma. Without properly processing what's happened to them, or having a safe space to talk about symptoms they're experiencing – such as nightmares and flashbacks – it is unlikely people will feel empowered to rebuild their lives.

This is particularly the case for women, as Tim explains. 'Cultural gender norms often restrict women's access to education and economic resources. Women are often the worst affected and most vulnerable in times of conflict. Tearfund will be working closely with them to help them overcome the trauma they have faced and to support them moving forwards.'

Join us for a future filled with hope for Syria

'We are making many steps forward and that's a cause for celebration,' says Tim. 'Pray that we will continue to see progress and remain faithful to where God is calling us to be. And what he's calling us to do.'

Please continue to partner with us and pray for Syria – for the country, the people and for our work.

Six ways you can pray for Syria

- **Peace:** pray for an end to the violence in Syria.
- **Relationship building:** pray for our team in Syria – for the existing relationships they have with local churches and organisations, and for wisdom and opportunities for new relationships too. These relationships are vital to help reach even more people with lifegiving support.
- **People returning to their homes:** lift up people who have fled to other countries, and those that have been internally displaced. Life is never the same again, so pray for comfort as they come back to face what they have lost. Pray for new opportunities and for support as they rebuild their lives.
- **Water and hygiene:** pray for the programmes Tearfund is implementing to help people have access to clean water and safe sanitation. Ask that these programmes will reach people in need.
- **Employment opportunities:** pray for new and sustainable opportunities for people in Syria to earn an income and provide for their families. Pray especially for young people; for there to be no lost generation and that they will have hope for their future.
- **Recovery from trauma:** lift up everyone who is suffering the after-effects of this long conflict. Pray for God's healing and comfort to surround them as well as freedom from anxiety and fear. Pray that people will be restored so that they feel empowered and encouraged to follow their dreams.

LIFTING WEIGHTS... FROM MEN'S SHOULDERS

'And how do we lead our families with love, speak in a kind way, and not with violence?' asks Jamal from Syria. He is one of the coaches at Tearfund's partner programme in Jordan and he is looking calmly at the ten men sitting around him.

An intense discussion soon arises on this rainy Wednesday afternoon. They talk open-heartedly, and although Jamal has to lower the level of the debate a few times, the atmosphere is warm and the men are respectful, listening to each other with smiles on their faces.

Later, Jamal* gives one of the participants a short story to read and then guides the men to reflect on its message – that love is stronger than physical strength and anger. Shortly after, the session is concluded with a statement from one of the participating Syrian refugees: 'Every problem in the world can be solved without using violence.'

It's now time for the physical exercises. Despite the rain, all the men participate in the fitness programme. Jamal's brother, Hussein*, takes over the leadership of the class. He shows the correct positions, counting aloud and encouraging the participants to invest all their energy. In that way, he coaches them through various exercises and games. After a while it's impossible to distinguish drops of rain from drops of sweat on their faces.

A heavy weight

Jamal and Hussein are both well educated, married, and have small children. They both had to flee the fighting in Syria, first from their homes in Homs, and several times after, when more violence and destruction caught up with them. Six years ago, both ended up in Jordan with their families.

Since the violence began in early 2011, almost 12 million Syrians have been forced to flee their

homes. Life can be very difficult in the neighbouring countries where many have sought safety. The local infrastructure isn't equipped to support them; they are often unwelcome and money and jobs are scarce.

'I had no work, was just idle, sitting at home in a bad mood, and ended up smoking more and putting on weight,' says Hussein.

He was then invited to attend a training event facilitated by a Tearfund partner working with a local community-based organisation. His brother, Jamal, and three other men were also invited. Over four days, the group of trainees learned how to teach others an exercise programme as well as how to lead focus group discussions and do home visits.

'I had a little teaching experience from working with an NGO [charity organisation]; my brother didn't. But the course was very useful,' says Jamal.

They are now halfway through the programme and can already see how the men involved have begun to change.

Building strength

'All have lost weight, live a healthier life and seem to be in a better mood. Some of them were very grumpy and negative in the beginning and didn't participate in group discussions or exercises. Now they are eager to engage in both and they have started to treat others with respect and listen to them,' says Jamal.

During home visits, the coaches get close to the men and their families. They see a lot of stress and anger. Living conditions are hard and men, who used to be providers, face being unable to feed and clothe their families. 'That's when we hear about their tough problems, which they cannot share in a group. It can make us feel sad inside, because some of them are really depressed. We then try to pass on information, encourage them – or get professional help, if needed.'

'In the group we experience that the men especially benefit a lot from topics like *Anger management* and *How to change habits*', says Jamal. The two brothers are not only coaches, but have also benefited themselves.

'I have lost about six kilos and got help to quit the cigarettes. And we are both in much better shape today and have improved our health,' says Hussein. He adds, 'We have also got to know people really well and developed a lot of friendships. Having something useful to do has improved my mental health, too, and I feel much more positive now when I come home to my family'.

PLEASE PRAY

- Thank God for hope – that peace and joy can be found even in the midst of the most difficult circumstances. Pray for those people struggling with anger and depression brought on by circumstances beyond their control.
- Lift up men, women and children around the world who have been forced to flee their homes because of conflict. Pray that our partners who are responding will have resources and wisdom to be able to provide support to them.
- Pray for peace and an end to conflict. Pray that all men, women and children around the world will learn the truth that: 'Every problem in the world can be solved without using violence.'

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

✔ In Haiti, water pollution, the lack of sewers and not having a safe way to dispose of rubbish is making the lives of people living in poverty even harder. Please pray for protection from disease. And pray for the success of a new programme Tearfund is starting that aims to help communities to dispose of their rubbish safely.

✔ Praise God: the last patient in the Democratic Republic of Congo being treated for Ebola has left hospital. It's too early to say Ebola has been eradicated completely, but do continue to pray this will happen. And please lift up everyone who has been affected by Ebola; pray for peace for them, and comfort for those who have lost loved ones to the disease.

✔ Thank God for the young people in Nigeria using their time and creativity to protect their local environment and make their community safer. Their efforts were recognised in the UK parliament this week, where they won a Green Hearts Hero Award from the Climate Coalition. Pray that this will inspire other young people to care for God's creation and help their communities too.