

ONE VOICE

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

The forgotten hurricane

Rescuers are still trying to reach survivors after Hurricane Eta ripped through Central America on 3 November. Tearfund's partner organisations in the region are asking for urgent prayer as they continue to respond.

'It's only this week people are beginning to ask about us,' says Alexis Pacheco, who leads Tearfund's work in Central America. 'Everyone was immersed in US elections... Central America is not covered much in the international media.'

The hurricane caused a landslide in Guatemala that left 44 people dead. Lives, homes and businesses have been lost. In Honduras, the authorities issued a red alert for the entire country, with 57 people losing their lives in the flooding. 'Hundreds of people are still waiting on the roofs of their houses in flooded areas,' says Alexis.

The church responds

Our church partners in Nicaragua and Honduras are working together with local pastors, using their church buildings as shelters.

Our partners are also working to assess the needs of the most vulnerable and to provide for those who have lost everything. Local churches have been trained in how to respond to a disaster like this.

'They are so ready to support their communities,' says Alexis. 'The church is more open now to help the communities – now many churches are opening as shelters which is amazing.'

Coronavirus threat

Eta was the second-most intense November hurricane on record. More than 150,000 people have been affected in Nicaragua, 1.8 million in Honduras, and 311,000 in Guatemala.

'Sadly most of the harvest has been destroyed,' says Alexis. 'People are very depressed and on top of the coronavirus this is so much.'

'There will be an outbreak soon, especially in the shelters... [there are] not enough masks and other items to prevent contamination.' Please join us in prayer for the people of Central America.

Please pray

- Lift up to God people whose lives have been devastated by Hurricane Eta. Particularly pray for those who are still awaiting rescue.
- Pray for the authorities, military and all those who are responding to this developing crisis.
- Thank God for the work of our local church partners and that the church in Central America is much more open to responding to this kind of crisis than it was 20 years ago.

A note from...

'We are permanently in crisis so are very resilient but we have been facing so much – and sometimes the resilience is not enough. In the middle of this the churches have played a vital role. There is great solidarity.'

Alexis Pacheco, Central America Team

Surviving winter

For many people around the world, cold weather isn't just inconvenient – it can be deadly. As we move closer to winter, Tearfund and our local partners have been reaching out to people who fear the months ahead.

Depending on where in the world we are, this work can look a little different, but its aims are the same: to help people in poverty survive the cold weather.

Lebanon

Halima* and her family fled the Syrian conflict with nothing but the clothes on their backs. They now live in a tent in a camp in Lebanon. There are seven of them in one room. Life is hard, but in winter it's even tougher.

'In winter, water infiltrates the tent from the door and from the roof,' shares Halima. 'We do what we can... but water still comes in. This very morning we could not turn on our stove for hours, because water had leaked in it from the roof.'

Hazeem* works for Tearfund's local church partner. He's been helping Halima – and families like hers – prepare for winter.

'Since [Hazeem] heard my story, he has been helping me with everything he can. He calls to check on us and inquire about our needs. I thank God for him!' says Halima. 'He helps us with food boxes every month and fuel vouchers in the winter. With it, I get fuel for heating every day at the gas station. He also gave us blankets and mattresses.'

Tearfund has also funded the distribution of hygiene kits in Halima's camp in response to coronavirus.

Bangladesh

In Padumpur, a remote town in Bangladesh, Tearfund's local partner, LAMB, carried out a blanket distribution ahead of the cold winter. They distributed more than 500 blankets to vulnerable people in the community.

Sumi* was one the recipients. She is a 70-year-old widow who lives at her daughter's house. She sleeps outside on the balcony.

'I don't have the money to purchase blankets so this is how I spend every night during winter season,' says Sumi. When our partners delivered the blanket to her, Sumi wept. 'I am very glad to get this and I hope this helps me lots.'

As we notice the temperature drop here in the UK, let us remember those for whom winter will be difficult.

Please pray

Heavenly Father,

We cry out on behalf of everyone living in fear of the upcoming winter. Please put your arms around them so they feel your comfort, warmth and hope.

We praise you for the organisations that are helping people in poverty to survive the winter. Give them wisdom and grant them the resources to reach even more people in need.

We ask you how we can be your hands and feet this season. Guide us through prayer and action where we can share your love with others.

Amen.

**Names changed to protect identities.*

Life to the full: a Bible study

We've created this Bible study for small groups to help you explore the question of how we can live life to the full. It includes a real-life story of transformation, group questions for discussion, a creative activity and prayer points. We hope it will bless and encourage your group.

'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.' (John 10:10)

At Tearfund, our goal is to bring about whole-life transformation. Working through the local church helps us to address not only people's physical needs, but their emotional and spiritual needs as well.

We provide our church partners with Bible studies that focus on a biblical understanding of poverty and community transformation. The churches then set up study groups within their communities. These groups become vital support networks, encouraging individuals in their faith and in their efforts to overcome life's challenges.

Daniel, from Sierra Leone, is just one of thousands of people who have attended a Tearfund Bible study group. It changed his life.

Daniel's story

Daniel grew up in poverty in Sierra Leone. When he was just a young teen, both his parents died and he had to drop out of school.

'I became so discouraged and full of fear and uncertainty about my future,' Daniel says.

Daniel spent most of his twenties struggling to survive. He saw no hope for his life to improve.

But when a friend invited him to a Bible study run by one of Tearfund's local partners, Daniel was amazed by what he heard. He learned about a God who loved him and had a good purpose for his life.

'I did not know that God knew me and had a plan for me,' Daniel says. Discovering this completely changed his outlook on life. Not only did he find an eternal hope in God, he started dreaming for a better life.

Daniel had a dream to become a motorbike taxi rider, but he did not have enough money to buy a motorbike. However, when Daniel explained the situation, his pastor helped him take out a loan to buy his first motorbike. Daniel quickly earned enough money from his new taxi service to pay back the loan, and then started to expand his business.

'From nothing, I was able to develop my own business through my encounter with God,' says Daniel. 'Currently, I have four motorbikes on my own, a furnished apartment, and I have gone back to school.'

In his new life with God, Daniel is doing things he never thought were possible for him.

Read John 10:10-15:

'The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

'I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me — just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep.'

Questions for group discussion

1. In John 10:10, Jesus promises to give us, his followers, 'life to the full'.
 1. What does it mean to you to have a full life?
 2. What obstacles can block people living in poverty from experiencing a full life?
2. When Daniel discovered that God loved him and had a plan and purpose for his life, he was finally able to face the future with excitement and hope instead of fear and dread.
 - a. How do you view the future?
 - b. How can we stay full of hope even when surrounded by challenges?
3. In the passage, the enemy is described as a thief who seeks to steal and destroy, and Jesus is described as a good shepherd who guides, protects and brings life. Daniel had many setbacks in life but ultimately, with God's help, he has been able to overcome those setbacks.
 - a. Are there any dreams that you have given up on because of disappointments and setbacks?
 - b. Can you remember a time where God brought hope out of a seemingly hopeless situation in your life?
4. The start of Daniel's transformation was when his friend invited him to a Bible study. This small act had a big impact. And it was the continued encouragement and practical support of the group that enabled Daniel to step out and pursue his dreams.
 - a. Who can you reach out to and encourage on a regular basis? Think of a specific person you can commit to doing this for.
 - b. What are some practical things you can do to support others? Think of an action you can take this week.

Creative activity

You may want to lead this activity during the group time, or share it for people to do in their own time.

1. Take a piece of paper and divide it in two.
2. On the left side, write the challenges you are currently facing in your life. These could be temptations, difficult circumstances, disappointments etc.
3. On the right side of the paper, write what God has blessed you with and his promises to you.
4. Spend some time looking at the left side of the page. Lift up these challenges to God and trust him to guide you through them.
5. Now look at the right side of the page. Spend some time thanking God for his blessings and his promises.

You may want to share what you are praying about with the group/a friend. Or it may be helpful to display God's promises to you in a prominent place so you remember them throughout the day.

Prayer points

- Thank God for the ways he has worked in Daniel's life. Pray that those who are still trapped in poverty will have access to the support and resources they need to live a full life. Pray that they will know God's abundant love for them.
- Pray for the situations you face where you need God's protection and guidance. Lift up your challenges to him and ask him to help you look to the future with hope and not fear.
- Pray for the person, or people, that you have committed to encourage and support. Ask God to show you how you can share his love and life with them.

Pray for the world

 In Yemen, children are facing the worst levels of malnutrition since the conflict there began. The UN warns that malnutrition in southern Yemen has risen 10 per cent this year – rising to 15 per cent in under-fives. Lift up these children to God and ask for his provision and protection. And pray for the work Tearfund's local partners are doing to help families overcome hunger.

 No one should be stopped from accessing vaccines because of where they live or what they can afford. Praise God for how vaccines have helped in the fight against diseases such as polio and Ebola. Lift up all those working coronavirus vaccines, and pray for their success. Pray that vaccines and resources will be shared with the world's poorest countries.

 More than 7,500 people have now fled Ivory Coast into neighbouring Liberia amid political tensions after the recent election. Over half of these are children, some of whom have been separated from their parents. Pray that families will be safely reunited. Pray for their protection, and that they will be able to access shelter and support. Pray for peace in Ivory Coast.