

ONE VOICE

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

DEVASTATING CYCLONE HITS INDIA AND BANGLADESH

A powerful storm has left a trail of destruction across parts of India and Bangladesh. Cyclone Amphan made landfall on Wednesday, with wind speeds as high as 175kmph uprooting trees, blowing off roofs and destroying power lines.

At the time of writing 84 people are confirmed to have been killed, while tens of thousands of homes have been destroyed. Flooding caused by the storm has devastated crops, while more than 14 million people have been left without power. The full extent of the damage is not yet known, with many rural areas cut off by damaged roads and collapsed bridges.

Mercifully, more than 3 million people were evacuated from coastal areas – averting further loss of life. However, with people crowded together in shelters, there are fears that there could be a dramatic surge in coronavirus cases.

A second disaster

Though the Rohingya refugee camps of Cox's Bazar were not in the storm's direct path, heavy rainfall and high winds have worsened living conditions and accessibility at a time when the first cases of coronavirus are emerging among the Rohingya people. The situation is still being assessed, but there are reports of flooding and mudslides in several of the camps.

'We anticipate a second disaster unfolding, compounding challenges for millions of people,' explains Sudarshan Reddy Kodooru, Tearfund's Country Director for Bangladesh.

'People in the camps were already living in overcrowded conditions, making social distancing impossible. If more homes are damaged, life will become increasingly precarious for people who have already suffered far too much.'

PLEASE PRAY

- Pray for people who have lost loved ones and for those whose homes have been destroyed. Pray for God's comfort upon them.
- Pray that further spread of the coronavirus will be averted. Pray in particular for the one million Rohingya people living in cramped refugee camps.
- Thank God that so many people were able to be evacuated, and that the storm's strength decreased before it hit land – this was a real answer to prayer.

A NOTE FROM...

'The lockdown that's been enforced because of coronavirus has left people without jobs or wages – meaning they have no way of supporting their families. This storm is a backbreaker for those in poverty living in coastal areas.' **Prince David, Tearfund Country Director for India.**

EMPTY POCKETS AND STOMACHS AS LOCKDOWN HITS HARD IN PAKISTAN

'I don't know what coronavirus is,' says Saqlain, 'or how long it will last, but I know my pockets are empty and I have a family to feed.'

Before the coronavirus lockdown, Saqlain* used to work at a brick kiln in eastern Pakistan. But he hasn't earned a single rupee in more than two weeks. It means he can't buy food for his wife and three children.

In Pakistan, many people are dependent on their daily wages. Thankfully, Saqlain has been helped by Tearfund and our local partners who are providing food parcels for vulnerable families. 'I would not have been able to provide for my family, so this means a lot,' Saqlain told us.

Essential supplies

Tearfund is working closely with our local partners to respond to communities in need during this pandemic. We're helping them share messages about the importance of good hygiene and sanitation, as well as providing food and other essential supplies.

So far in Pakistan, we've distributed six tonnes of flour, 800kg of sugar, one tonne of rice, 894 bars of soap along with other food and hygiene products. We've reached nearly 4,000 people since the start of our response.

Roheen is another person who has been helped by the distribution. She's a widow with three children and also worked at the brick kiln. 'The kiln was the only source of income for me,' says Roheen. 'I have no income to feed my family. I have no words to thank Tearfund enough. May God bless them.'

Fighting fear

In Pakistan there have been more than 42,000 reported cases of coronavirus and 903 deaths. With lockdown bringing the local economy to standstill, many people are fearing both financial disaster and hunger.

Fikhar, who lives in southern Pakistan, has four daughters and his wife to provide for. He can't work because of lockdown. 'My wife and I slept with empty stomachs before we received the food package,' he revealed. 'I am thankful to the [Tearfund partner] and Tearfund for helping me and my family in tough times.'

PLEASE PRAY

- Lift up people in Pakistan who are struggling with the coronavirus crisis and the effects of lockdown, particularly those who are now unable to earn an income.
- Thank God that Tearfund and our partners are able to support hungry and fearful families with essential supplies.
- Pray that coronavirus will not spread further in Pakistan and that lockdown can be lifted at the right time.

**All names changed to protect identity*

UNITED BY LOVE: CHURCH IN A TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

In the midst of a global pandemic, the church is becoming who she was made to be. Leaving old divisions behind, congregations are rising up as one body to respond to this crisis.

Sunday services look different these days. If you have an internet connection, there's thousands of church live streams to choose from. No more worries about turning up late, half-way through the first worship song. You can even 'go to church' in your pyjamas.

Thousands more tune in to church across the UK

We may (and should) long for the day we can all meet together again, but the temporary shutdown of in-person church services is not all bad. In fact, churches have become more accessible than ever before – and thousands more are attending.

A recent ComRes survey for Tearfund discovered that a quarter of UK adults have watched or listened to a religious service since lockdown. And one in twenty of those people say they have never been to church before. That equates to potentially hundreds of thousands of non-churchgoers across the UK tuning in to services*.

Churches have a unique opportunity right now to connect with many who would never normally walk through their doors.

In this together

At the heart of every church – from Baptist to Anglican to Eastern Orthodox – is the love of Christ. And we are seeing that love put into action in new and extraordinary ways.

A message that has become familiar during the coronavirus pandemic is 'we're in this together'. It's no different for the church, and this crisis has pushed churches to put aside their doctrinal differences and work together to provide practical support for those in need.

Churches are busier than ever, with congregations coming together to volunteer in new initiatives – from delivering food packages to checking in on isolated or older people. And as churches unite and engage with their communities on deeper levels, the message of the gospel shines brighter.

A few weeks ago, over 65 churches across the UK joined together virtually to encourage the nation with a beautiful rendition of the worship song *The Blessing*. The response from the general public was overwhelmingly positive. The video quickly went viral on multiple social media platforms and was even featured on national television.

A worldwide response

At Tearfund, the stories coming in from our staff and hundreds of local church partners share one common theme – just as in the UK, churches everywhere are uniting to help the most vulnerable in their communities.

Tearfund's model of working with local churches is proving effective in a time of crisis. When businesses and organisations are forced to close their doors, the church remains. Church leaders know the needs of their local community and are able to respond quickly.

'The church can reach the community in ways other organisations cannot,' explains Marc Romyr Antoine, who leads Tearfund's work in Haiti. 'We can show everyone the strength of the church in difficult times.'

Brazil is another place where Tearfund has been encouraged to see churches working together in response to the pandemic. Tearfund staff in Brazil are now working on creating an online platform where partners, local churches, and individuals can share resources.

'We have the opportunity to be a witness of unity and kindness. We can demonstrate this with actions, such as distribution of food or [hygiene] kits, and also with words. Many are open to hear the gospel, and above all to receive a message of hope,' says Claudia Moreira, Tearfund's Country Director for Brazil.

Changing attitudes towards the church

In some countries where Christianity is a significant minority, the church is becoming a lifeline for those in urgent need.

'There are great opportunities for the relationship between the church and government to be strengthened because governments see and appreciate what churches can offer in terms of the coronavirus response,' says Steve Collins who has been overseeing Tearfund's work in Asia.

A shift has begun. People are facing new challenges and many are becoming more open to faith. These same challenges have pushed the church outside of buildings and into the wider community, where God's hope is needed more than ever.

A global prayer to change the world

As local churches around the world work in unity, it's also a time for the global church to unite in prayer. We all have the amazing gift of being able to pray for our brothers and sisters around the world at any time.

At Tearfund, we believe that prayer can change the world. We depend on prayer to be able to continue our work in some of the most challenging situations.

'It is infinitely moving to hear our supporters, who are also afflicted in no small measure, wanting to know how we are doing and how they can pray for us and for those who depend on our work,' says Emmanuel Murangira, Tearfund's Country Director for Rwanda. 'We too are praying unceasingly for our supporters that God keeps them safe from this virus.'

PLEASE PRAY

- Thank God that churches all over the world are working hard to serve and bless their local communities. Pray that God will give church leaders renewed strength and wisdom.
- Praise God that many more people in the UK are open to exploring faith and watching online church services. Pray that they will come to know Jesus during this time.
- Ask for God's protection over the most vulnerable communities where there is limited access to healthcare, and for an end to this global pandemic.

**Savanta ComRes interviewed 2,101 UK adults aged 18+ online between 24th and 27th April 2020. 24% said they had watched or listened to a religious service since lockdown, and one in twenty of those people said they had never been to church before. That equates to potentially hundreds of thousands of non-churchgoers across the UK tuning in to services, according to Tearfund's calculations. Data were weighted to be nationally representative of all UK adults by age, gender, region and social grade. Savanta ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.*

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

 In South Sudan, our team has relocated from our office temporarily because of fighting and tensions in the area. Pray that this will not disrupt Tearfund's work in the region; that we are able continue to run our feeding centres and help people overcome poverty. Pray for the safety of our staff, partners and the communities we serve. And pray for peace.

 Praise God that we have been able to assist local governments in Nepal with their requests for us to help protect vulnerable communities during the coronavirus pandemic. Our partners have built handwashing stations and distributed emergency food packages, hand sanitiser and medical masks to hundreds of households. Pray that we are able to continue helping communities in need.

 Clashes between armed groups in Chad have now forced more than 2.7 million people to flee their homes. Lacking both shelter and access to clean water and safe sanitation, they are extremely vulnerable to catching coronavirus. Pray for their protection and for an end to the violence. And pray for wisdom for our team in how they can safely support those in need.