

# ONE VOICE

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

## **'FAKE NEWS' AND THE BATTLE AGAINST CORONAVIRUS IN THE DRC**

**When coronavirus was declared a global pandemic, rumours and misinformation spread as fast as the disease. That's when the church stepped in.**

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), it can be difficult to access reliable public health information and so people resort to social media and other online sources. But the internet isn't always a source of expertise – you can't believe everything you read.

Misinformation can lead to more infections, as well as stigmatisation and violence towards victims and those responding to the outbreaks. Our staff and local partners have seen this in their ongoing work tackling the Ebola epidemic – and now with coronavirus.

### **Speaking truth**

That's why Tearfund started a campaign using social media, text messages and radio broadcasts. It's called Nakataa Coronavirus (which translates in English as 'I refuse coronavirus'). The aim is to prevent the spread of the virus by sharing crucial public health information.

So far, the campaign has seen more than 200,000 people engaging with it on social media. Tens of thousands of people have also been reached on Whatsapp and via radio with prevention and prayer messages.

To contain the spread of coronavirus, all church activities have stopped. These restrictions have hit congregations hard, but many pastors have used this opportunity to creatively engage with their communities.

'Just because we are isolated, we cannot say we will do nothing,' says Reverend Marcel, a pastor at the International Evangelical Parish of Goma. 'God is revealing to us how we can reach out to those around us.'

### **Prayer and praise**

The country needs our prayers as it faces many challenges including extreme poverty and conflict. But with the right information, families can now take steps to protect themselves from coronavirus.

And among our prayers we can add praise. Yesterday (25 June), the Ebola outbreak in the eastern DRC – which has ravaged the region for two years – was declared over. We pray that the north-west of the country will see similar success, as it continues to tackle the disease.

## PLEASE PRAY

Father God,

In the face of so many challenges, we ask that you will be close to the people of the DRC. Protect them from coronavirus and Ebola and bring peace to this nation. We thank you for the good work being done to combat misinformation around coronavirus, and ask that local pastors will know your encouragement in all they do.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

## A NOTE FROM...

'It isn't easy to know what information is rumour and what is actually true. So we have mobilised pastors to spread messages of coronavirus prevention and messages of hope and encouragement. People listen to their faith leaders. They are now sharing the right information and finding alternative ways to hold services – in fact, more people have been reached with the gospel.'

**Hebdavi Muhindo, Tearfund Country Director for the DRC**

## **TERRIFYING VIOLENCE, DISEASE AND HUNGER HIT BURKINA FASO**

**Violence is intensifying, coronavirus threatens, and food supplies are running out. The humanitarian crisis in Burkina Faso could be about to get much worse.**

For many in Burkina Faso, it's becoming harder to access food, clean water and other essentials. At least 700,000 people have been forced to flee their homes because of fighting between communities. More than a thousand schools have shut and nearly a quarter of a million children are missing out on their education.

There is also the growing threat of coronavirus spreading. Although the number of reported cases (894) and deaths (53) is relatively low at the moment, the virus has already hit some areas where people who've fled their homes are living. These places are usually crowded and often don't have adequate supplies of clean water and healthcare facilities.

There is the growing threat of coronavirus spreading.

This year's lean season – the period between harvests – is predicted to be one of the most serious in decades. In recent months, rainfall has been erratic and scarce, meaning farmers have had fewer crops. Many people are now running out of food.

### **Harder to reach**

Tearfund works with partner organisations in Burkina Faso and across nations affected by the conflict in the central Sahel region. But, as much of the country becomes engulfed in fighting between armed groups, it makes it harder for Tearfund's partners and other humanitarian workers to reach those most in need.

In addition, the restrictions brought in because of coronavirus mean Tearfund staff and partners are mostly having to work from home if they are able to.

In the main cities life continues pretty much as normal, but in the eastern and northern regions people are finding it much harder.

'What is happening is disastrous,' says Gaston Slanwa, who leads Tearfund's work in Burkina Faso. 'Something urgent needs to be done to save communities from the spectre of death hanging over them caused by the unprecedented insecurity and the coronavirus pandemic. We cannot be indifferent to these threats.'

## **PLEASE PRAY**

Father God,

We ask you to bring peace, provision and protection for Burkina Faso. May those people whose lives have become even more vulnerable know the hope that is to be found in you. And may our staff, partners and other humanitarian groups be able to support them in these difficult times.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

## **IT TAKES A VILAGE (TO STAY HEALTHY)**

**Hla and her family were often suffering with sickness and struggling to afford healthcare. But Hla's life – and her whole village – changed when she learned how to protect her family from disease.**

Hla\* lives with her husband and three children in a small village in rural Myanmar. A few years ago the whole family was frequently getting ill. Hla was constantly worried about her children, and the hospital bills were piling up.

'There was usually one family member sick every month,' remembers Hla. 'Most of the family expenditure was for health. My husband was hospitalised because of malaria, my eldest son was hospitalised for diarrhea, and the other two children had skin diseases.'

'In order to pay for treatment, my belongings slowly disappeared by being sold off to make enough money to cover costs.' And it wasn't just Hla and her family who were suffering. Most households in the village had similar health problems and some people were dying at an early age.

### **Learning how to stay safe**

One of the main reasons the villagers were often getting ill was because they didn't have access to clean water and there were no systems in place for waste disposal or keeping communal areas – including their shared outdoor toilets – clean. This meant they drank dirty and unboiled water, lived among piles of rubbish and waste, and their open toilet system was unsanitary and without hand-washing facilities.

Then, Tearfund's local partner visited the village to provide hygiene training and invited people from across the community to take part. The villagers learned about the importance of practices such as hand-washing and sterilising drinking water, proper waste management, and how to use nets to prevent malaria-spreading mosquitoes biting them during the night.

### **Working together to get healthy**

After the training, community members felt motivated to change their behaviours to keep themselves and the village safe and healthy. Those who attended the training drew up a plan of action, and started teaching others what they had learned.

'It benefitted all of us,' says Hla. 'I started practicing the health behaviours, and then my family adopted them. Villagers pooled their money to purchase rubbish bins, and then set them up around the community. A team of volunteers committed to regularly emptying the bins and disposing of the waste.'

Tearfund's partner helped the village build sanitary toilets. Now, every household has access to one and everyone knows the importance of hand-washing after using them. The villagers worked hard to make their community a healthy and safe place for all. And, as a result of their efforts, they started to see a significant decrease in cases of diarrhoea and sickness.

### **An empowered community**

Life now looks very different for Hla. Her family are healthy and strong, which makes life so much easier and enjoyable. And with fewer healthcare expenses, the family are able to save money and now have their own house.

Hla's community continues to follow and pass on the hygiene behaviours they learned. They are now empowered to protect themselves and future generations from preventable disease. 'It was not a sudden change; it took nearly seven years to change, but it was worth it for us,' says Hla.

### **PLEASE PRAY**

- Thank God that Hla and her community were able to work together to protect themselves from disease.
- Pray that our local partners will be able to train and help many more communities, especially during the coronavirus pandemic when good hygiene practices are more important than ever.
- Lift up all those who are vulnerable to sickness due to unsanitary living conditions and who lack access to clean water. Pray for protection over their health and provision for their needs.

*\*Name changed to protect identity.*

*This article references events that took place before the coronavirus crisis.*

## PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



The rainy season has begun in Ivory Coast. This is a dangerous time, as many people cannot afford homes that can withstand natural disasters. Heavy rainfall last week led to a mudslide that killed 13 people and flattened homes. Many children are still missing. Pray they will be found, and pray comfort over those grieving. Ask for God's protection over these communities.



Coronavirus enforced lockdowns have led to an increase in gender-based violence globally. Home isn't a safe place for millions of women and girls, leaving them open to abuse as well as harmful practises, such as female genital mutilation or cutting. Pray for their safety. Lift up the work Tearfund is doing to support vulnerable women and girls. And pray for an end to violence against women.



There is growing food insecurity in Pakistan as crop-eating locusts have, in some places, destroyed up to 30 per cent of harvests. Mango farmers have been particularly affected. Coronavirus has also slowed down trade and farmers are concerned they will be unable to sell what little they have. Pray for increased trade opportunities, and provision for farmers who are struggling.