

ONE VOICE

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

WHY WATER CHANGES EVERYTHING

Following five years of extreme drought, a remote, rural community in Brazil was struggling to access clean water.

The nearest water source people could reach was miles away and so many had no choice but to travel each day to collect water for their families. Even then, the water was unsafe to drink. This left people suffering from diarrhea and other illnesses that can be deadly for children.

Damiana and her daughters were making this journey several times a day. ‘Often I had to hurry to not miss school and I would not have time for food,’ says Damiana’s daughter, Marissa* (13).

Let every voice be heard

Access to clean water has the power to transform the lives of people living in poverty. Tearfund’s local partner, the Evangelical Action Church (ACEV), looked at ways they could help families like Damiana’s access clean water. They held local meetings to make sure everyone’s voice was heard.

A decision was made to drill a well and the community helped locate a site that was accessible to everyone. The well was then drilled and now provides the community with safe, clean water.

More time to do the things we love

‘The well has changed my life because I do not have to fetch water. I have more time to study and I go to school less worried,’ Marissa says. Her younger sister, Flavia adds: ‘God is good and wonderful, now I have more time to study and I do not worry about going to school hungry.’

The whole town is benefiting from the new, reliable, sustainable water source. ‘This was one of the greatest gifts for the community that I have ever seen,’ says Marissa’s dad, Damião. ‘It was our greatest need.’

PLEASE PRAY

- Thank God that Marissa, Flavia and other children in this community no longer have to make long journeys to collect water. Pray a blessing over their futures.
- Pray for wisdom for our partners who are working with communities to help them improve their access to clean water and other essentials for life.
- Lift up the 844 million people who still have no access no access to safe water. Pray for protection against disease and for swift solutions to be found so that they can overcome poverty.

**Names have been changed to protect identities*

A NOTE FROM...

'It is great to see people have access to drinking water and become free from much suffering. But it's even better is to see them experience the tangible love of God through Tearfund's church partners! This love brings the ability to unite people from different places in one objective, to reach the most vulnerable, renew hope and transform lives.'

Priscilla Souza, Brazil Programme Co-ordinator

FARMING GOD'S WAY

New laws being introduced to the UK could help shift farming to being more environmentally friendly. But many communities in developing countries are already a step ahead...

Recently, the UK Parliament introduced a new Agriculture Bill, representing one of the biggest shifts in farming practices in decades.

Central to the new law is a pledge to pay farmers to look after their land in a way that is good for the environment – protecting soil fertility, encouraging wildlife, ensuring clean air and water, and keeping carbon in the ground rather than fuelling climate change. Previous legislation encouraged farmers to work the land more intensively, prioritising short term yields over sustainability.

But what does this have to do with Tearfund? Well, thanks to an innovative scheme run by our local church partners, many communities we work with are a step ahead when it comes to farming in a way that looks after God's creation.

Working with nature

In many developing countries, sustainable farming practices can be a matter of life and death. The climate crisis is making extreme weather events such as droughts more common, and farmers have to be prepared.

An initiative called 'Farming God's way' is helping them do just that.

At the heart of the initiative is the practice of 'mulching'. Essentially, the soil is covered in a layer of dead leaves and grass. This helps retain the soil's moisture, which is crucial in harsh climates. When these materials decay, their nutrients are passed into the soil. The need for extensive ploughing, which is labour intensive and can damage the health of the soil, is eliminated. This mimics natural processes – hence 'farming God's way'.

Answered prayers

The results can be life-changing. Moyo*, a father of four from Malawi, spent much of his life in a near constant state of hunger. Prolonged droughts meant he couldn't harvest enough either to feed his family or sell to make a living. His children couldn't go to school as he was unable to pay the fees.

When one of Tearfund's local partners taught him about Farming God's Way, all that changed. Within two years, he had quadrupled the yield of his crop. Now he has more than enough to go around. What's more, he's teaching other members of his community the same methods.

'God answers prayers,' Moyo tells us. 'I could not imagine coming out of my poverty and hunger-stricken situation. I would encourage people to hold on to their faith, as one day God will visit them.'

An act of worship

As well as higher crop yields, Farming God's Way produces benefits to people such as improved income from the sale of surplus food, reduced manual labour, and greater resilience to climate change. It's great for the environment too, with outcomes such as healthier soil, erosion control, water conservation, and keeping carbon in the ground rather than releasing it into the atmosphere.

Farmers like Moyo are encouraged to see their work not merely as something they need to do to survive, but as a spiritual vocation. Producing food is a way of glorifying God and loving your neighbour, and caring for the soil is an act of worship.

At a time of environmental crisis, such an approach is deeply necessary. Soil is essential for human life, so we need to look after it. For too long that hasn't been the case, but now there are reasons to hope.

PLEASE PRAY

- Lift up Moyo and his family. Thank God for the turnaround in his fortunes, and pray for God's continued blessing upon him.
- Pray that the Farming God's Way initiative will spread, transforming many more communities.
- Pray that the new Agriculture Bill in the UK will lead to positive change. And pray that governments around the world will adopt policies that promote environmentally friendly farming, as well as protect the livelihoods of farmers.

**Name changed to protect identity.*

GOD'S WAKE UP CALL

Following the breakup of his marriage, corporate lawyer Chris decided that the way he lived his life needed to change, along with his relationship with God. He signed up to visit Zambia with Tearfund Go – it was the wake-up call he needed.

'When I was younger I never really did any of the traditional gap year stuff,' remembers Chris. 'Then I got married, got a career in the city, had kids and there just wasn't time for anything else!'

The demands of a high-powered career had called the shots for many years. However, that was about to change. 'A few years ago my wife and I separated, which was devastating,' Chris continues. 'I moved out and had to start a new life. My whole reliance had to be on God, letting him start from scratch with me.'

Letting God lead

For Chris, part of this difficult transition was thinking about how he would spend his annual leave when he didn't have the children. Taking a leap of faith, he signed up to be a team leader with Tearfund Go, which offers volunteering placements around the world. He chose a two-week placement in Ndola, Zambia.

'Landing in Zambia I remember thinking, "God, you're going to have to do some amazing stuff here, because I'm not qualified to do this!" That's been my experience over the past couple of years, with having to start a whole new life. I have had to trust in God. He has made me strong.'

One of the biggest challenges Chris faced was leading a Sunday service in one of the local churches, along with his team. It was way out of his comfort zone.

'When we arrived at church the worship was underway, but without the pastor and with only a handful of the congregation present. They sing and worship with their whole bodies – dancing, clapping, lifting their hands to heaven and even parading around in a sort of holy conga line. I was blown away by the energy of Zambian worship!'

It was an important lesson for Chris – the congregation had so little materially, and very little security. However, rather than what could be seen as weakness, they had something far stronger.

'Again and again, I saw God's strength working through people in otherwise bleak circumstances,' says Chris. 'It was people's relationship with Jesus that sustained them. It helped me understand that this is the one thing that brings true peace and joy – the sort which underpins everything else happening in your life. And that's what I needed.'

Lasting impact

Reflecting on his two weeks in Zambia, Chris explains how God was giving him a new sense of purpose for his life.

'Volunteering with Tearfund has made me reflect a lot on who I am, the skills that I have and how God can use them,' he says. 'Are they just for my work as a senior lawyer in a pharmaceutical company, or has he given me these skills for other purposes? My experience in Zambia felt like God making me more into who I was meant to be – it was incredible.'

'Seeing people living in such difficult circumstances has changed my outlook and even, to an extent, my politics. Since coming back from Zambia I've started donating to Tearfund every month and I've become a trustee of a local homelessness charity.'

'The biggest impact from my time in Zambia has been the way I raise my kids. I'm even more committed now to helping them engage in God's call to care for those living in poverty. In fact, I plan to do another trip with Tearfund Go, but with my kids next time!'

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

 Please pray for people affected by the Coronavirus. Pray for comfort for those who have lost loved ones, wisdom for medical staff and guidance for authorities trying to contain the virus. Pray that it will not spread further, and for protection over our staff, partners and the communities we work with across East and South East Asia.

 Following severe drought in Zimbabwe, many families are faced with making hard choices. As wells run dry they must collect water from unsafe sources. Pray for protection for the people of Zimbabwe, wisdom for those in power – especially the Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Finance – and that rain will fall soon.

 Please lift up people across Central and South America who feel they have no choice but to leave their countries because of insecurity and high unemployment. Pray for protection for them, as routes out can be dangerous, and people can be left vulnerable to exploitation. Pray that they will find new opportunities and ways to provide for their families.